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Central VOICE

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Animal Advocates and Gay Community a Perfect Match?

By Frank Pizzoli

"What is it about lesbians and our pets? I don't think I've ever found myself in a group of queer women where the conversation doesn't turn to our dogs, or cats, or horses, or finches, or fish, or…. Well you get the idea," wrote Sassafras Lowery in *Curve* magazine.

"A match made in Heaven" is what author Andrew DePrisco (Woof! A Gay Man's Guide to Dogs) calls the relationship between gay men and dogs.

Animal Advocates of South Central PA's tagline is, "Let compassion be your compass. Choose vegan."

We're almost all on the same page, maybe minus the "vegan" but many LGBT individuals have made the choice not to eat flesh or dairy products.

The mission of Animal Advocates of South Central PA is "to spread compassion for animals in a peaceful and respectful way. We believe change comes from an understanding and a willingness to do better. We promote nonviolence and kindness to all beings," Adrienne Williams of Animal Advocates tells *Central Voice*.

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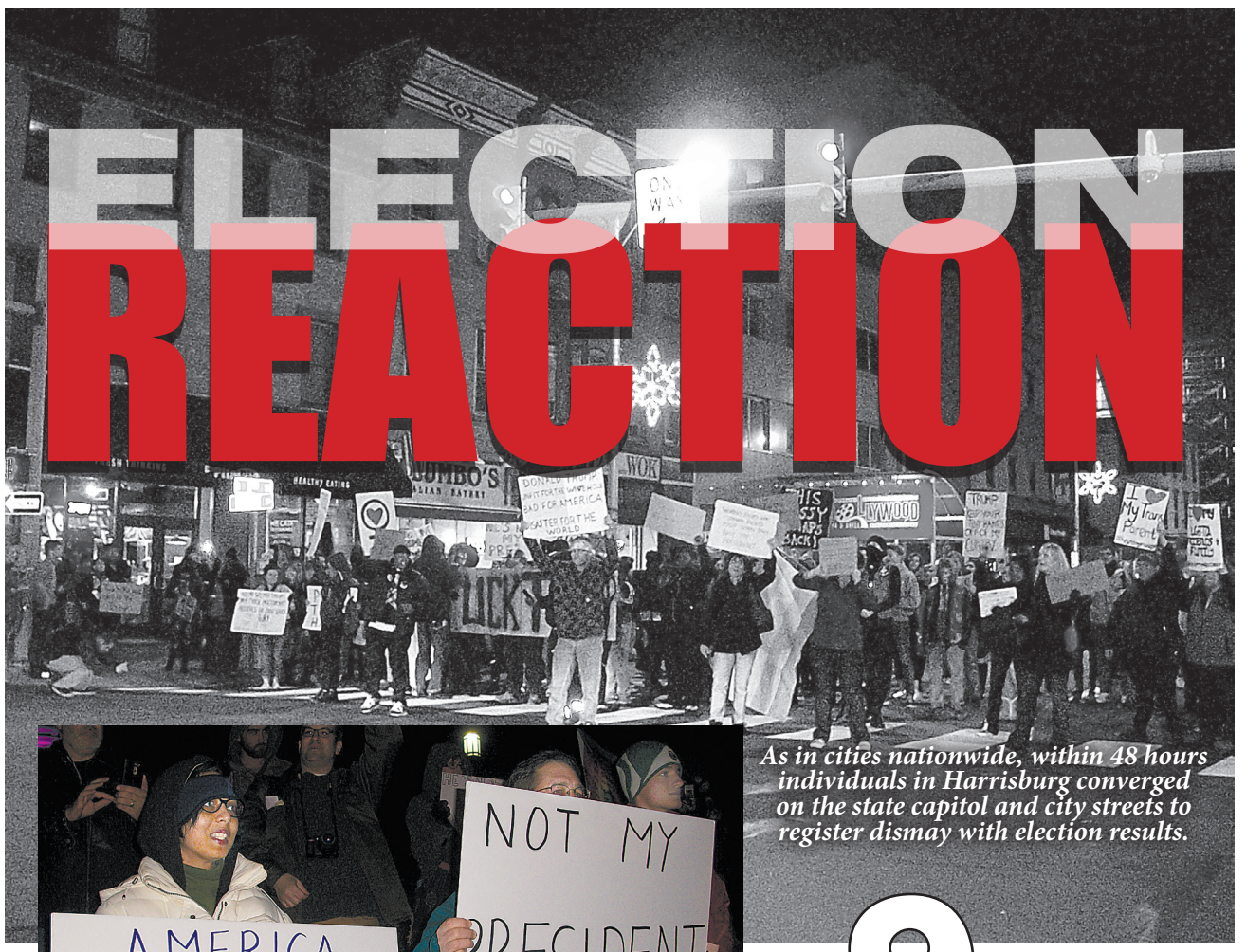
Adrienne Williams on a visit to Territorio de Zaguates in Costa Rica for the rescue of over 800 stray and abandoned dogs.



As in cities nationwide, within 48 hours individuals in Harrisburg converged on the state capitol and city streets to register dismay with election results.

also- 9 Things Trump Could Do on LGBT Issues
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HERE'S WHAT THE REGION'S LGBT LEADERS HAVE TO SAY

By Central Voice

If you didn't vote for Donald Trump, post-election felt like what a sociology professor calls *social anomie* – a sense of unbalance created by events.

LGBT voters who cast their ballot for Trump felt better. Estimates of gays who voted for Trump range from 11% to 20%. Estimates of the gay Republican vote usually hover around 20-25% in previous election cycles.

Hillary Clinton was supposed to win.

The Republican Party was supposed to be in tatters. The GOP will have to redefine itself.

Then came the results. The political equation exploded. The Liberal Left and Center were now on the other end of: You are entitled to your own opinion. You are not entitled to your own facts. Fact is Trump won under the Electoral College rules, like them or not.

Now looks like the Democratic Party will be busing out on soul-searching weekends. As of November 8, 2016, there are 34 Republican governors.

The election brought the Republican Party's control of all three aspects of state government – executive, house, senate - to 25 states. Democrats' share of trifectas dropped to six states.

In the meantime, *Central Voice* asked the region's

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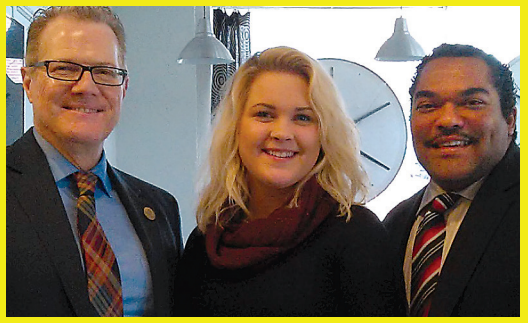
OUT & ABOUT



Hamilton Health Center held a lunch hour program at Midtown Cinema, Harrisburg. Brad Gebhart, Kaitlynne Wagner, and Dr. Art Williams greet 40 guests at Hamilton Health Center.

Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine spoke at the World AIDS Day Conference, Pittsburgh, emphasizing the importance of HIV disease education for health professionals working with transgender individuals. "Helping medical professionals better understand how to prevent and treat HIV disease in the transgender community can be a matter of life and death," she said.

WORLD AIDS DAY

DECEMBER 1ST IS DEDICATED TO RAISING AWARENESS OF THE AIDS PANDEMIC CAUSED BY THE SPREAD OF HIV INFECTION, AND MOURNING THOSE WHO HAVE DIED OF THE DISEASE.

Alder Health Services organized a candlelight memorial service Dec. 1 on the steps of the State Capitol. The organization also held a benefit Dec. 2 in cooperation with Appalachian Brewing Company.

Appalachian Brewing Company on Dec. 2 hosted Alder Health Services at a World AIDS Day benefit attended by 75 people.

Political Updates

INTERNATIONAL

• USAID No Longer Allows Discrimination

The Obama administration recently issued a rule that would bar contractors administering foreign aid programs through USAID from discriminating against LGBT people in providing services. "This rule means that any organization that contracts with USAID must ensure that all people can benefit from its federally funded programs," National Security Advisor Susan Rice said. "It's a major step towards ensuring that American assistance is provided in a fair and equitable manner.

• Gay U.S. Ambassador will Resign

When President-elect Donald Trump takes office, gay U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic James "Wally" Brewster will resign. "At midday on Jan 20, 2017, I will submit my resignation as U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic and Bob and I will leave in search of new adventures," said Brewster in a statement the U.S. Embassy in the Dominican Republic posted to its Twitter page. "Our spirits will remain with you forever." Listín Diario, a Dominican newspaper, reported Brewster made the announcement during a speech he gave at a pre-Thanksgiving event that the American Chamber of Commerce of the Dominican Republic hosted. Brewster, who is a former member of the Human Rights Campaign board of director, has faced a series of attacks since President Obama nominated him to represent the U.S. in the Dominican Republic in 2013. Nicolás de Jesús López Rodríguez, the former cardinal of the Archdiocese of Santo Domingo, has repeatedly used anti-gay slurs to describe Brewster.

NATIONAL

• NC Lawmaker Outs Himself

A North Carolina House member says he's making public his bisexuality so people know members of the LGBT community remain in the General Assembly and will keep speaking up against discrimination. Democratic Rep. Cecil Brockman of Guilford County told the News & Record of Greensboro of his decision to come out. Brockman is a first-term legislator who faces no opposition next week for a second two-year term. The only other openly gay member - Guilford County Rep. Chris Sgro - is stepping down at the end of the year. Sgro leads the gay-rights group Equality North Carolina and was appointed last spring largely to oppose the law limiting LGBT rights known as House Bill 2. Brockman voted against the law last March.

• Navy to Name Research Ship after Sally Ride

The U.S. Navy will commission a research ship named after late out astronaut Sally Ride, who also worked as a professor and scientist in San Diego, and lived in La Jolla until her death in 2012. Owned by the Navy and operated by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the 238-foot R/V Sally Ride is a state-of-the-art research vessel – a Neil Armstrong-class auxiliary general oceanographic research, or "AGOR" ship," first announced by U.S. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus in 2013.Traditionally, AGORs are named for nationally recognized leaders in exploration and science. The R/V Sally Ride is designed to investigate the workings of the Earth's oceans, and will host researchers pursuing solutions to the planet's environmental challenges.

• Trans Health Insurance Buyer's Guide

One Colorado recently released their 2017 Transgender Health Insurance Buyer's Guide. "Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, Coloradans cannot be denied or limited coverage based on "pre-existing conditions" — including sexual orientation, gender identity, or health conditions including HIV status. Still, if you're transgender, finding coverage that meets all your health care needs can be complicated," said Executive Director Daniel Ramos. "Excluding coverage for transgender individuals still remains one of the most frequent examples of LGBTQ discrimination. All Coloradans — including LGBTQ Coloradans — should have the opportunity to live healthy lives and get the health care and coverage they need."

REGIONAL

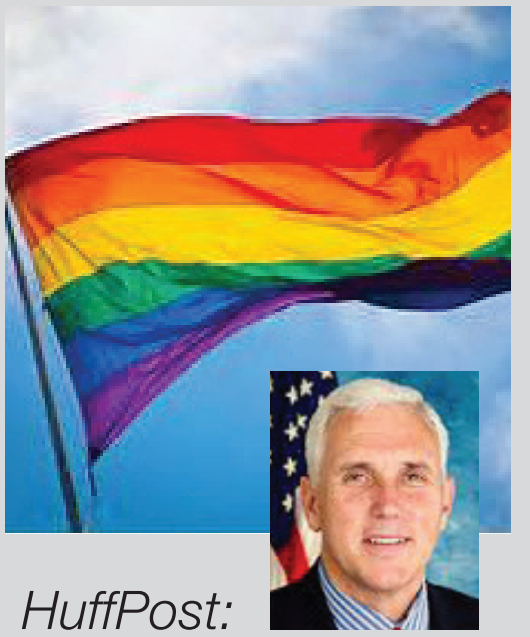
• Update on Anti-trans Case

Jason Landau Goodman reports that Lambda Legal fought in federal court for a Preliminary Injunction to bar the enforcement of an anti-trans policy adopted by the Pine-Richland School Board. The policy was adopted in September following months of contentious school board meetings. The resolution that was adopted was a directive to the district administration to bar trans students from using the facilities that correspond with their gender identity. The hearing before Judge Mark Hornak lasted almost six hours. His decision on the Preliminary Injunction is forthcoming.

The Lambda Legal attorneys representing the three trans student plaintiffs were Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, Kara Ingelhart, and Christopher Clark. The Pine-Richland School District is represented by the Pittsburgh law firm Maiello, Brungo, & Maiello. Nov. 23, with help from Lambda Legal, the Pennsylvania Youth Congress filed an amicus brief along with THRIVE of Southwest PA in support of the trans student plaintiffs in Pine-Richland. The brief features the experiences of transgender students throughout the Commonwealth.

• PA Sect. Gary Tennis Receives Award

Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Gary Tennis received the 2016 Benjamin Rush Award presented by the Philadelphia Psychiatric Society. The award is presented annually to a "non-psychiatrist who has brought recognition to mental illness and health over the past year." The Philadelphia Psychiatric Society is a chapter of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society which is a district branch of the American Psychiatric Association. It comprises over 950 psychiatrists practicing in Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties. "Mental health and substance use disorder are two diseases often found to be co-existing in persons who are addicted to drugs," said Tennis. "The more we can educate consumers about the interaction between mental health and addiction, the better job we can do in meeting the treatment needs of those who suffer from both these diseases."



HuffPost: VP Pence Trolled by Rainbow Flags

Curtis M. Wong, Queer Voices Senior Editor, *The Huffington Post* reports that two weeks after Mike Pence was schooled on racial and ethnic diversity by the cast of Broadway's "Hamilton," others who disagree with the vice president-elect's views are expressing themselves in profound ways.

Residents in the Chevy Chase neighborhood of Washington, D.C. where Pence iscurrently renting a $6,000-a-month home, are displaying rainbow flags on their porches and lawns, ABC 7 News reports. Their aim, neighbors say, is to send a "respectful message" to Pence, who vehemently opposes same-sex marriage and other LGBTQ-related causes.

> **"...I hope he will change his mind."**
>
> **-Pence neighbor displaying flag**

"This is one way that I can show my disagreement," Ilse Heintzen, who lives on Pence's block, told the news station. "I have no idea what [the vice president- elect] will think about it, but I hope he will change his mind."

ABC 7 reporter Suzanne Kennedy posted snapshots of the flags in question on Twitter.

Her colleague, Tim Barber, followed suit. His photo showed the home of a resident who hung their flag just above a campaign sign for Democratic president nominee Hillary Clinton.

No word yet on whether or not Pence has seen the flags, but if the vice president-elect's history has taught us anything, opposition to the incoming administration's stance on LGBTQ rights will be critical. The Indiana governor has supported LGBTQ discrimination under the banner of religious freedom, and laid the groundwork for a massive HIV outbreak in his state by slashing public health funding and opposing needle exchange efforts, believing that they promoted drug use.

Here's to hoping the colorful gesture has an impact.

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voice box

BEER & POLITICS

What really surprised me is how many guys I heard talk about voting for Trump. Gay guys! We were drinking beer so didn't challenge anyone. Now I wish I had.

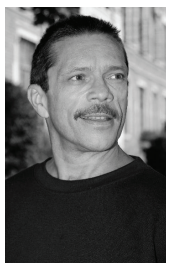
-Beer Guy

See our extensive analysis of election results from local leaders and a Trump supporter beginning on page 1 and on pages 20-21.

E-mail your thoughts to posops@aol.com

publisher's voice

Organic + Organization = Action



Frank Pizzoli

Yeah, we're scared. Fear is a rational response to Vice President Mike Pence.

What if Pence writes up anti-gay legislation for the nation like he did for his home state of Indiana?

What if President Donald Trump trades off LGBT civil rights as a bargaining chip is the art of his deals?

Here's what Pence has said on gay issues, according to Time.com:

He said gay couples signaled 'societal collapse.'

In 2006, as head of the Republican Study Committee, a group of the 100 most-conservative House members, Pence rose in support of a constitutional amendment that would have defined marriage as between a man and a woman. Citing a Harvard researcher, Pence said in his speech, "societal collapse was always brought about following an advent of the deterioration of marriage and family." Pence also called being gay a choice and said keeping gays from marrying was not discrimination, but an enforcement of "God's idea."

He opposed a law that would prohibit discrimination against LGBT people in the workplace.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would have banned discrimination against people based on sexual orientation. Pence voted against that law in 2007 and later said the law "wages war on freedom and religion in the workplace." More than 20 years after the bill was first introduced, the Senate approved the proposal in 2013, but the bill failed in the House.

He opposed the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell.*

Pence favored the longtime military policy of not letting soldiers openly identify as gay. In 2010, Pence told CNN he did not want to see the military become "a backdrop for social experimentation." The policy ended in 2011.

He rejected the Obama administration directive on transgender bathrooms

In May, the federal government directed school districts to allow students to use the bathroom of the gender they identify with. The directive came as criticism crescendoed around a North Carolina law that would have restricted the use of bathrooms.

Along with many other conservatives, Pence opposed Obama's directive and said it was a state issue. "The federal government has not business getting involved in issues of this nature," Pence said.

Organic + Organization = Action

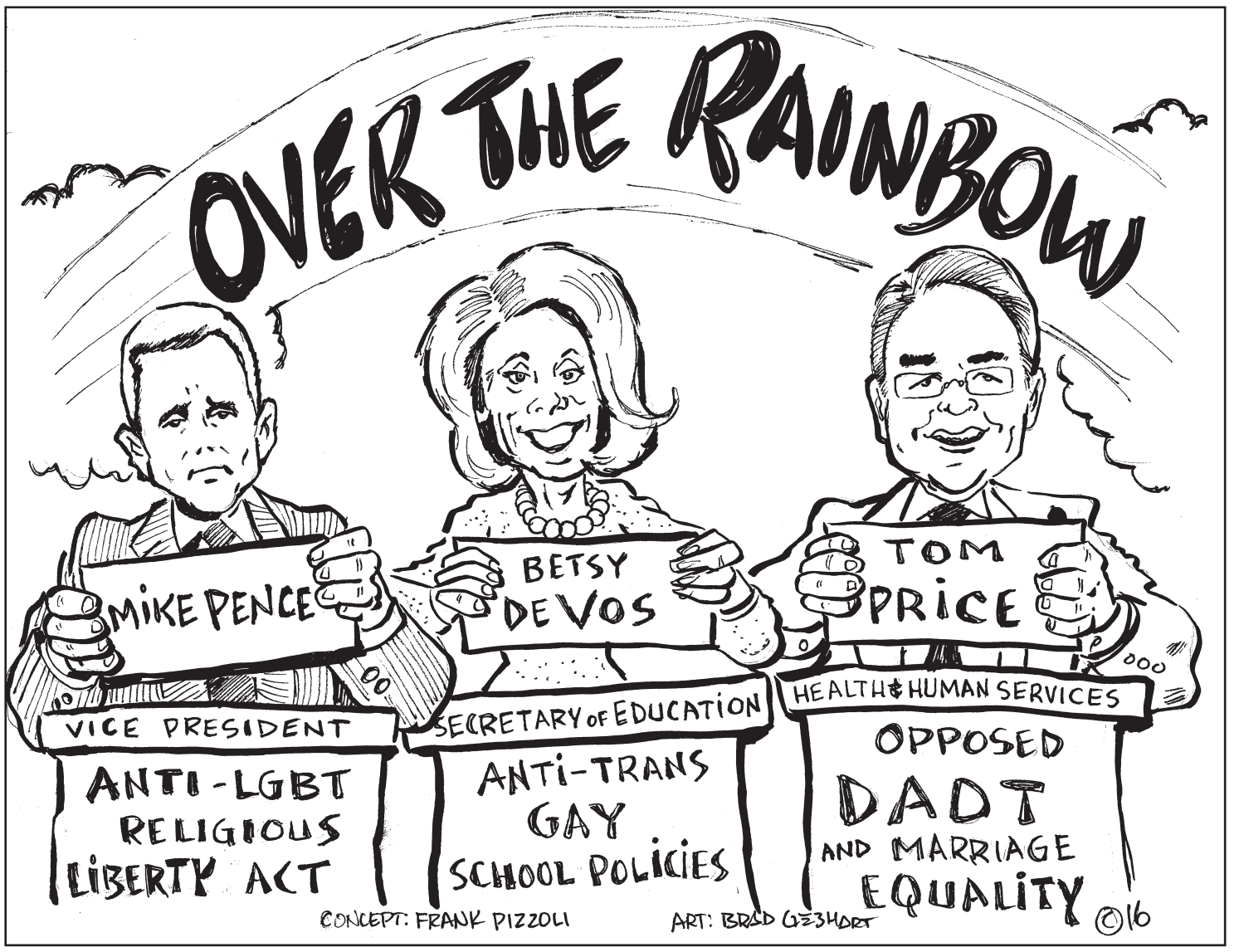
As I speak with local and national leaders, I get a distinct response depending on the time one came of age.

If I speak with younger folks, who came of age when the winds of change were at their backs – high schools with GSAs, municipal ordinances protecting gay civil rights, marriage equality, adoption rights, transgender everything in the news – I get a "hair on fire" response. They are of the age of "organizations".

If I speak to older folks – who were alive before Stonewall, or young when it happened, who remember the deep repressions of their age, who remember the onset of AIDS and a president who was in office for eight years and didn't even say the word until seven and half years in office, who literally fought for their lives – I get a long exhale. "We're going to get through this," they say with a humble, not cocky, confidence. They are of the age of "organic" responses to a crisis. ACT UP, Queer Nation.

What we need in this circumstance, in 2017, is a smooth combination of both approaches. Each set of experiences – organizational and organic - holds vital truths and strategies needed to face the potential reversal of LGBT civil rights.

Only if we value the shoulders on whom we stand and value those who stand on our shoulders will we be successful. Together.



community voice

Can the GLB Vote Swing an Election?

By Wendy Fenwick
Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide

There's been much discussion over the LGBT vote in the last presidential election. How many gay people voted for Donald Trump? Here is a solid analysis of GLB voting patterns by Wendy Fenwick using data from various credible sources.

Analysis

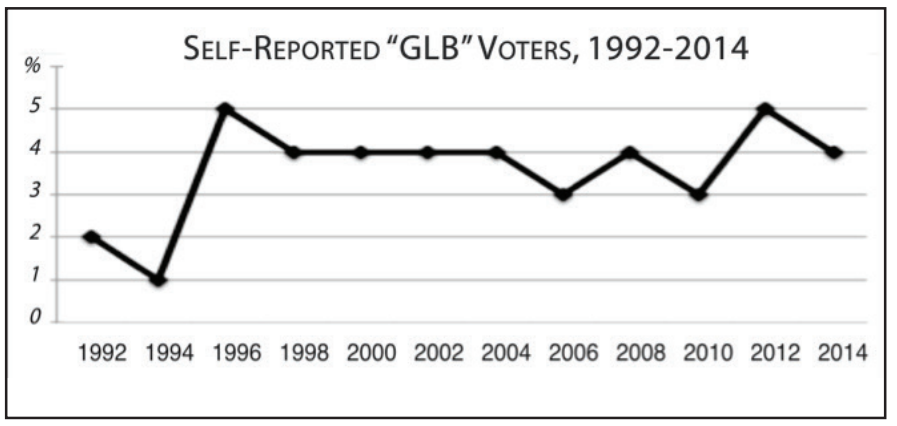
To begin with a clarification, since you may already be wondering about that "GLB" usage above. That's the formulation used in exit polls* going back to the election of 1992, when the question was first presented to voters, along with many others, as they left their polling places on election day. The question is asked in the starkest of terms: "Are you gay, lesbian, or bisexual?" And the options offered are equally unequivocal: either "Yes" or "No."

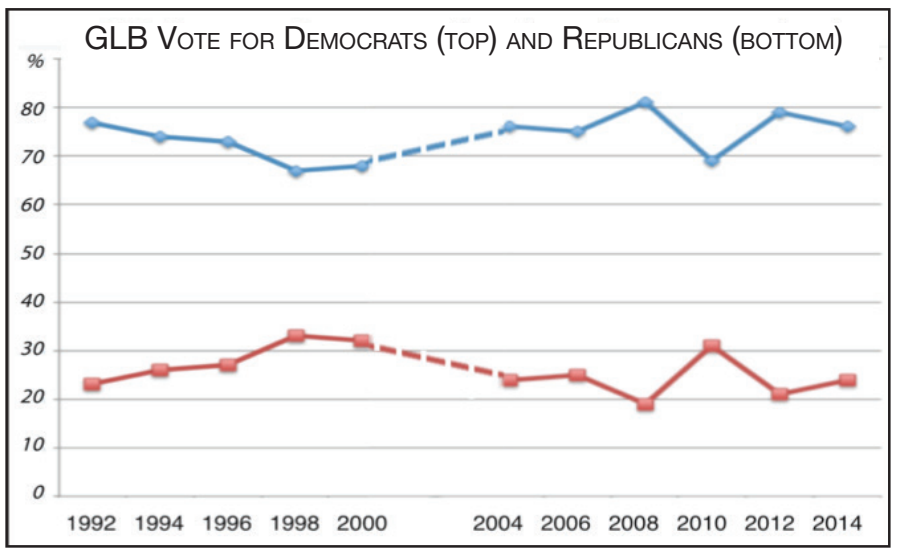
Whatever the limitations of this approach—and clearly the inclusion of "bisexual" and the exclusion of "transgender" has implications both statistical and political—it does give a rough idea of the clout of this sexual minority as an electoral force. What's more, it can help us to answer what has been, and to some extent still is, a critical question and a source of heated debate going back to the work of Alfred Kinsey: Just how many gay people are there in the world, anyway?

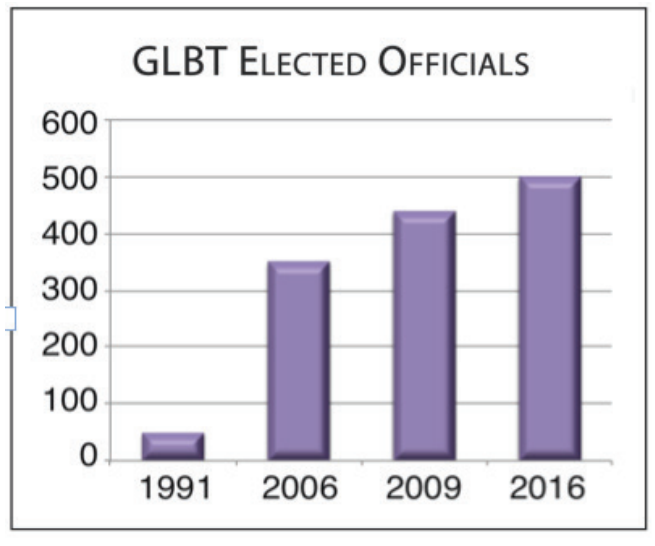
The answer provided by U.S. exit polls is fairly clear and consistent: it's around four percent. If we ignore the first two years (1992 and 1994) as early outliers, the range has been between three and five percent since 1996. That in itself seems significant—perhaps the most important finding of these polls, because it puts to rest the religious Right's insistence that the number of GLBT people in the U.S. is vanishingly small, perhaps only one percent. On the other hand, the four percent figure doesn't come close to Kinsey's famous "ten percent" estimate in 1948's Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. Here it's important to recognize that Kinsey asked his subjects about their sexual behavior and not their identity—our words for "gay" and "lesbian" scarcely existed back then—while the exit poll asks people to identify themselves with an explicit label.

Kinsey's interviews, moreover, were carried out in private after trust had been established with the interviewer, while an exit poll is conducted in a public setting and administered by a casual stranger. For this reason, it almost seems surprising that fully four percent of U.S. voters would be willing to come out as gay. Surely there must be a residual element of closetedness, a reluctance to share this highly personal information, still exerting itself over some proportion of respondents. Thus the four percent figure should probably be viewed as a floor, an undercount of the "true" population of GLB voters—but by how much we shall never know.

The use of exit polls to extrapolate the total gay population assumes, of course, that GLB voters turn out at roughly the same rate as other voters. It seems a reasonable assumption, if only because there's no reason to suppose that GLB voters would depart appreciably from non-gay voters. The best predictor of voter turnout historically has been a voting bloc's socioeconomic status or SES—the higher it is, the higher the turnout—and many studies have shown that GLBT people's SES tracks closely with that of Americans as a whole. In fact, some research on this question has shown that GLB participation on election day varies only marginally from that of other voters.†







SO, HOW HAS THE GLB MINORITY voted over the years? You may not be astonished to learn that the GLB electorate leans heavily toward Democratic candidates, though you may be struck by the magnitude of this preference.

Moreover, this lopsided pattern has been remarkably consistent all the way back to the election of 1992, running at around 75 percent Democratic within a range of 67 to 81 percent. While it doesn't quite match the extent of African-American voters' preference for Democrats (93 percent voted for Obama in 2012), it exceeds the historical preference of Hispanic voters, which has risen from 61 percent in 1992 (for Bill Clinton) to 71 percent for Obama in 2012.

The fact that GLB voters favor Democrats over Republicans by a ratio of three to one suggests that they form a cohesive voting bloc comparable to that of African-Americans or Hispanics (who comprised twelve and nine percent of the electorate, respectively, in 2012). By the way, two other minorities that exit polls track, Jews and Asians, also skew heavily for Democrats, coming in at 69 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the last presidential election, closely matching the GLB numbers.

Another measure of the political influence of GLBT voters is the number of elected officials in the U.S. who are openly gay or lesbian, and this number has been climbing steadily for the past three decades.

The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund is an organization that keeps track of the number of elected officials—in addition to helping GLBT candidates get elected—and they recently compiled the totals, including officials at the federal, state, and city levels, for four years (1991, 2006, 2009, and 2016). From the earliest out officials in the 1970s—Harvey Milk of San Francisco was not the first, contrary to popular belief (that was Elaine Noble of Cambridge, Mass.)—that number has climbed from around four dozen in 1991 to around 500 today—and the number appears to be rising steadily.

For the record, the highest-ranking elected official is Tammy Baldwin, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin. There are currently six openly gay members of the House—all of them Democrats—one each from Arizona, California, Colorado, New York, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.

Clearly, the GLB vote is not sufficient to elect gay candidates on its own, which means that non-gay voters must be increasingly willing to elect gay candidates, which in turn means that being gay is no longer the automatic disqualifier that it once was. This willingness to elect gay candidates is reflected in polls that show steadily rising support for gay equality among rank-and-file voters. Thus, for example, support for same-sex marriage stood at 27 percent in 1996, and it had risen to 58 percent by June 2015—the month of the Supreme Court's ruling that legalized same-sex marriage nationally—and has since gained another three points (according to the Gallup Organization). Other polls show a slow and steady rise in the proportion of Americans who support a national Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA)—now a clear majority—though passage has been stalled in Congress for years. But that, as they say, is a topic for another time.

Wendy Fenwick is an international writer based in Boston.

Trump Voter Explains His Choice

By Frank Pizzoli

"You will have far more support than you realize," says Bill Carter when asked about the LGBT community's fears of a backlash under a Trump presidency.

Carter, 65, lives in North East Florida along the St Johns River where it's "quiet, peaceful".

He voted for Trump after a thoughtful process that eventually eliminated other candidates. "I'm a Hillary Clinton detractor," he tells *Central Voice*. He would have "voted for Bernie Sanders if I thought he had a snowball's chance in Hell of winning". In other words, Carter came to his decision after a long, deliberate process.

"Immigration is an issue that's important to me," Carter says. He leads a life full of diversity. Carter has been a cop, a ballroom dance instructor, is a Viet Nam War veteran, a former newscaster, and has been married to his fifth wife for 35 years. "I was disabled for a time after I was crushed between two cars," he shares.

Today, he is a licensed nurse and paramedic. "I travelled to Haiti in 2012 for help with restoring their emergency medical system after their natural disaster," he says.

His friends span the human continuum – straight, gay, transgender, mixed race. His formerly southern slave-owning family supported a slave school on their land. Many went on to college. To this day, a family educational trust supports the higher education goals of qualifying individuals.

Post election, the LGBT and immigrant communities, separately and inasmuch as they also overlap, are worried. Gay activist fear major setbacks on basic gay civil rights achieved over last decade. Immigrant communities fear a backlash.

Vice President Mike Pence presided over Indiana's anti-gay law when he was governor, a move that observers said would have led to his defeat had he not been selected by President Donald Trump as his running mate.

Pense believes in "reparative therapy" to change individuals from their LGBT sexuality to heterosexual.

Anticipating he might try to legislate his belief, Pittsburgh City Council in November banned the practice which has been wholeheartedly discredited by the American Medical Association and other scientific organizations. Movement Advancement Project says that five states plus the District of Columbia ban the practice, 20 states have introduced banning laws but 45 have no law.

President Trump's Health and Human Services secretary Tom Price, six-term Congressman, has a deeply anti-gay record. Price said in 2013 that laws to expand LGBT rights would drive up "medical health and costs," calling for research into the fiscal impact of laws advancing the "homosexual agenda."

Immigrant communities are concerned too, a group that intersects with the gay community, as the LGBT community intersects with most of the larger population since the US Census estimates that 3-5% of the population is gay.

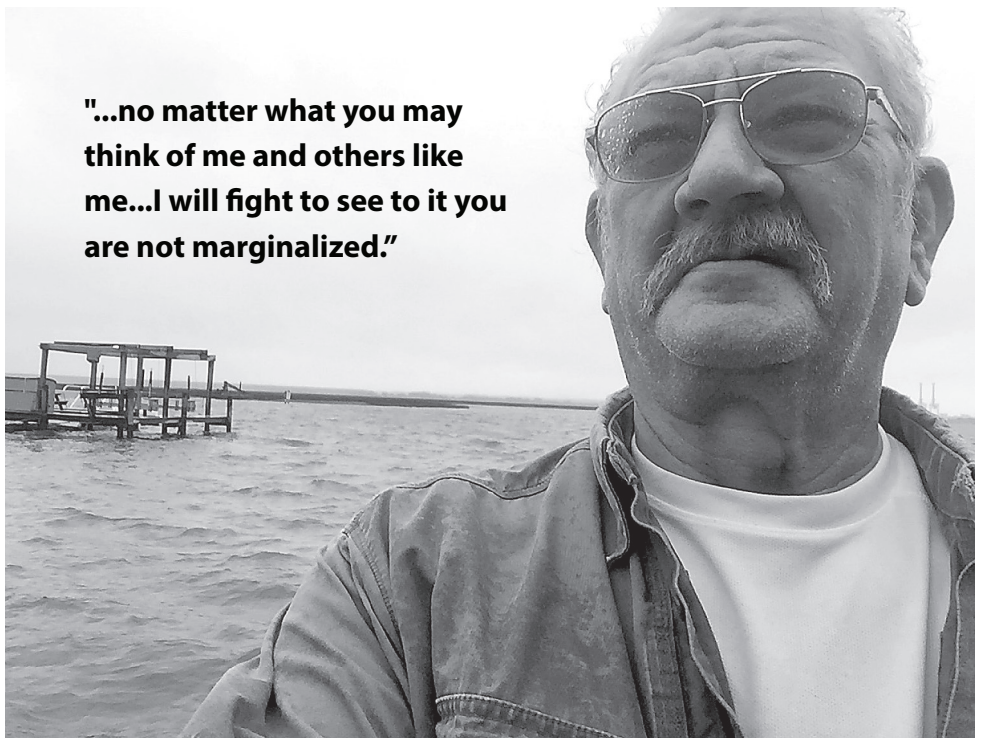
"In the last week we've seen over 200 incidents of hate crimes across the country," Imam Khalid Latif, executive director of the Islamic Center at New York University, said Nov. 24.

"LGBTQ immigrants are too often targets for violence and persecution," said Aaron C. Morris, executive director, Immigration Equality.

"We cannot allow a 'new normal' of hate, anger, and derision to be considered an acceptable means of dealing with disagreement and difference," said Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director, The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York.

Carter shares with *Central Voice* a statement he prepared right after the election:

"I understand some of your fear and disappointment. In reading your writings I am what you fear most. A Southern, White, Christian, Conservative, Male and a Republican. I don't know why I frighten you. Based on research published in Jan 2016. I make up about 26% of the population of the US whereas Democrats make up 30%.



Carter, 65, lives in North East Florida along the St Johns River where it's "quiet, peaceful".

I have only physically done harm to two members of the LGBTQ Community. They were not representative of what you stand for (at least I hope not) and it was in self-defense.

I hold no malice against you. I generally support your causes. To think that you might be sent into some type of shock therapy for being LGBTQ to force you to be like me is in my mind not a scenario entertained by me or people like me. I would not allow it. I believe many like me wouldn't. I would fight for your right to be you.

I know within that 26% there probably are maybe .05% who are intolerant to your life style. Sorry, but no demographic is perfect.

You ask yourself "How can this privileged white guy empathize with me?" It's actually simple. We fear the same things you do. We fear being overrun by a government that is unresponsive to us. One that belittles our culture, our faith, our values. More than once I responded to Dawn's (Carter's friend in the media) writings only to be told "Nut up buttercup. Things are changing and you are going to either change with them or be marginalized". That's not an exact quote. It is a compilation. Not an ounce of empathy expressed.

Mr. Obama backed your play and Sec. Clinton was going to take it to the next level. So now here it is. From what I gather your worse nightmare. For the first time in a long time. A Republican House, Senate, and President. The possibility of a majority conservative Supreme Court, an attorney general that might be Giuliani. So yes, I do understand your fear. I also know there are others like me. People who care deeply for your rights and will not allow harm to come to you. I know it is of little consolation but no matter what you may think of me and others like me. I will fight to see to it you are not marginalized."

Open Letter from LGBTQ Youth to Region's Muslim Community

Pennsylvania Muslim and LGBTQ Community leaders following a vigil for the Orlando Massacre in the State Capitol (June 2016)

by The Pennsylvania Youth Congress

In response to a hateful note sent to the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg last November, this week, the Pennsylvania Youth Congress issued an Open Letter to stand with the region's Muslim community.

State Rep. Patty Kim organized a press conference to press back against this hateful incident at the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg's mosque in Steelton. Speakers included incoming Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg President Asgar Rizwan, Muslim community leader Samia Malik, Steelton Mayor Doug Brown, and Rep. Patty Kim.

Open letter -

Dear Muslim Members of our Pennsylvania Family,

We are outraged and appalled by all acts of Islamophobia, and continue to be with you in love and solidarity.

The letter recently received by the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg is incensing to people of conscience. Please know from our LGBTQ youth community, we are here for you in whatever you may need.

We write to you as young LGBTQ Pennsylvanians to share that:

We celebrate you. We value you. We support and love you. We are proud to work together with you in building a beloved community.

From our intersection with LGBTQ Muslims, to our connection as communities often targeted for harm, we stand together in our values for human decency and respect.

We cannot and will not stand idly by while any of us is targeted for intimidation, hatred, or violence. We hold ourselves accountable to standing with you against any injustice you may experience, and toward embracing each other in love and respect.

We are proud to be with you in our shared commonwealth, communities, and nation.

Yours in Solidarity,
The Pennsylvania Youth Congress

PA Ranks 9th Nationally for Overall Mental Health

Up from a ranking of 15th, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Ted Dallas recently announced that the state ranked 9th in overall mental health, according to a Mental Health America (MHA) report.

MHA recently released its annual State of Mental Health Report, which ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia based on several mental health and access measures. Pennsylvania's overall ranking indicates a lower prevalence of mental illness and higher rates of access to care in comparison to most states. The report includes data about both adult and youth mental health, as well as prevalence and access to care measures:

One in five adults have a mental health condition - that is over 40 million Americans; more than the populations of New York and Florida combined.

Nationally, youth mental health is worsening, with rates of youth depression increasing from 8.5 percent in 2011 to 11.1 percent in 2014. Eighty percent of youth with severe depression were left with no or insufficient treatment.

Access to care is critical to getting Pennsylvanians the help they need. In 2014, fifty-six percent of American adults with a mental illness did not receive treatment. The access measures include access to treatment, insurance, and special education, quality and cost of insurance, and workforce availability.

"We often talk about how education, access to housing, and food all play factors in an individual's shot at a successful future, but the treatment of mental health issues is another critical piece to that puzzle," said Secretary Dallas. "While we are making progress, there is still work to be done. There are too many Pennsylvanians that are not receiving the treatment they need to live a happy and healthy life, and we are working to change that."

The results show that nationally there is increased health care coverage, but states are still falling short in meeting the needs of those with mental health concerns.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Family Planning Options Now More Accessible

The Wolf Administration recently announced changes in family planning services in the Commonwealth surrounding long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), which include the intrauterine device (IUD) and the birth control implant. These policy changes, according to a news release, will improve public health, provide families with additional choice in their contraception selection, reduce unplanned pregnancies, and save taxpayer money.

"We are making changes to reduce hurdles to effective family planning options and optimize LARC usage," said DHS Secretary Ted Dallas. "Pennsylvania is the latest of many states adopting a variety of payment policies to facilitate LARC usage."

As of last month, Pennsylvania's Medicaid fee-for-service program will make payment for LARC devices to incentivize hospitals to stock and store them and eliminate the hurdle of high up-front costs of long-acting contraceptives.

In addition, DHS is increasing certain Medical Assistance fee-for-service family planning rates for outpatient providers, including the insertion and removal of LARC, with the aim of reducing unplanned pregnancies and improving maternal and child health.

"This policy change, and the increased accessibility of LARC that will follow, should help to increase usage by six percent and help to prevent unintended pregnancies – saving millions in taxpayer dollars."

Thirty-five percent of women do not attend their outpatient post-partum appointment, and over half of unplanned pregnancies occur within two years following delivery. It is more efficient for a woman who has just delivered a baby to have a LARC inserted while she is still at the hospital rather than wait until a post-partum visit several weeks later, which she may not attend.

LARC methods are highly effective in preventing pregnancy, last for several years, and are easy to use. If someone wants to become pregnant or stop using them, they can be removed at that time. LARC provide nearly complete protection against pregnancy for three to 10 years. This is in contrast to birth control pills, which are about 90 percent effective.

Additionally, the Department of Health (DOH) will provide training for physicians and health care practitioners through federal funding that will support expansion of LARC post-partum and as a pregnancy prevention practice.

"This is a public health issue that crosses both economic and social lines. Back-to-back pregnancies are an increased risk to maternal health outcomes," said DOH Secretary Dr. Karen Murphy. "The Wolf Administration is committed to reducing unplanned pregnancies and improving birth outcomes. Research shows that inadequate birth spacing can heighten the risk of encountering pregnancy challenges, autism in second born children, low birth weight, and preterm birth."

According to The Guttmacher Institute, 51 percent of all U.S. births in 2010 were paid for by public insurance through Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Indian Health Service. A publicly funded birth cost an average of $12,770 in prenatal care, labor, and delivery, postpartum care and 12 months of infant care; when 60 months of care are included, the cost per birth increases to $20,716.

YOUTH SURVEY:

22% of LGBTQ students attempted suicide in 2015

According to the 2015 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 22% of LGBTQ students have made a suicide attempt in the last year, versus 4.8% of the heterosexual-cis students.

YRBS is high school data, though some middle schools in MA do administer a YRBS. In Boston Public Schools, for example, the system-wide middle school YRBS actually asks about sexual orientation identity (although not sexual behavior, alas). Many await a report on suicide prevalence by S.O., yet to be released by Boston.

If the middle school data on self-identified LGB students is consistent with our MA high school data, we're talking about a 4+ higher rate of attempts by our youth versus their straight-cis peers.

A grossly disproportionate risk for suicide ideation, attempt, and attempt with injury, has been clear, at least in this state, for over 20 years and yet many mainstream youth suicide monitors fail to mention or to highlight the disparities.

Moreover, disaggregations of LGBTQ by gender, race, and ethnicity still show higher suicide risk among students of color.

Establishing Covenants

By Chris Thomas
Special to Central Voice

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and the Earth." (Genesis 9:13)

Rev. Kelly Waint knew she would be accepted - by her family, her friends, and even by her congregation at Market Square Presbyterian Church on 2nd Street in Downtown Harrisburg, where she'd served for more than a decade.

But she was still nervous four years ago - preparing to publicly come out.

"I wasn't sure how they'd react," She remembered. "Fortunately, they wrapped their arms around me and Kristen (Rev. Waint's wife)."

Waint's church, the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), has done the same, at least over time. The mainline protestant denomination (the largest vein of the 500-year-old, Scottish-born tradition in the United States) has been grappling with its views on sexuality for the past 40 years.

After initially affirming a stance against homosexuality (while also establishing a taskforce on the subject) in 1976, the church accepted gay members two years later. It was the next step for one of nation's most progressive churches - the one in which Waint grew up.

"There was never a sense where some people were welcome and others were not," she remembered of her congregation in Texas.

For context's sake, it's worth noting Pennsylvania didn't take its sodomy laws off the books until 1980.

Market Square offers most of the traditional ministerial offerings - choir, Sunday School, youth groups, etc. Starting Sept. 11, the church will host an adult class geared toward the LGBTQ+ community and its allies.

I want to make sure LGBT members are welcome," Rev. Waint said. "Our mission statement makes it clear it's an open, welcoming, and affirming church. We think intentionally about that and we think specifically about where we're advertising and people are aware of it."

Streamlined Affirmation

PCUSA was among several Christian traditions to adopt affirming and tolerant views of homosexuality over the past five decades, including The Episcopal Church, the mainline Lutheran Church (ELCA), and the Old Catholic Church - all of which can be found in Central Pennsylvania.

The latter shouldn't be confused with the Roman Catholic Church, which is still, officially, non-affirming - though they continue many of the old traditions like the Eucharist (also known as the Lord's Supper) and the Episcopate (bishops who oversee several churches in a geographic area). The Parish of St. Joseph is on Linglestown Road in Harrisburg.

But one group claims the first, openly gay, ordained minister within their tradition: the United Church of Christ (UCC). It's one of several firsts UCC celebrates, according to Rev. Katie Cort.

She's been the minister at Grace UCC on New Holland Pike in Lancaster since 2015.

"We were the first historically white denomination to ordain an African-American," she stated. "The first to ordain a woman...and the first Christian church to affirm the right of same-gender couples to marry."

One of the UCC's primary, defining, traits is in its name: "United." It's a veritable hodgepodge of Protestantism, tracing its roots to some of the nation's earliest congregations. "Their wish," Rev. Cort said is for the Church Universal to "come together under one umbrella."

But that's balanced by a "covenant/autonomy dichotomy" - allowing individual congregations the freedom to run themselves as they see fit. Grace became an affirming congregation in 2004, and adopted a mission statement that reads, in part: "Grace UCC welcomes all – gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight and transgender – persons into the full life and ministry of the church."

Whereas many traditions require long, arduous processes to change their by-laws, UCC Congregations like Grace have are independent to make many official decisions on affirmation on their own.

"I think that respect of the individual is so vital, because it allows congregations to grow in a way they feel called without having to worry about an authoritative branch squelching that vision," Rev. Cort said.

Crosses to bear

But the road to reconciliation isn't always easy to tread. Rev. Waint said she's heard many heartbreaking testimonies of disapproval and outright rejection.

"There's been a tremendous amount of damage," Rev. Waint said, reflecting on testimonies she's heard from openly gay members, especially younger ones. "(Church) was an important place for them, but at the time they realized the truth about themselves, that church really turned on them...a place of love and safety turns dangerous and wounds their spirit."

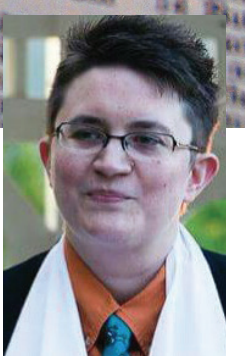
This has been the prevalent theme of the Church's relationship with the LGBTQ+ and statistics on church membership seem to reinforce it.

The most popular Christian traditions in the nation are among the least affirming. A combined 46.2 % of the adult population are members of Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant churches, according to Pew Research Center's latest Religious Landscape Study, published in 2014.

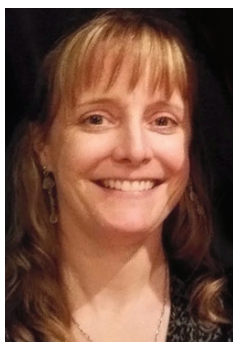
That trend is largely mirrored in the Commonwealth (combined 43%).

While there are affirming individuals within the clergy and laity within those traditions, Pew's research found 55% of Evangelical Protestants held unfavorable views on homosexuality (though the opposite was found among Roman Catholics, 70% of which answered in the affirmative).

"The Church is still a human institution and we still have issues of fear, misunderstanding and suspicion," Rev. Waint said. "That has nothing to do with scriptures. It's a basic fear of 'the other' - setting one's self against others, saying 'I am more holy than this person.'"



Pastor Katie Cort, Grace United Church of Christ.
Photo by Jezabeth Roca Gonzalez



Rev. Kelly Waint, Market Square Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg

As public opinion of gay rights has improved, church attendance has declined and in a strange twist, churches most willing to keep up with the socio-political times are the ones seeing the steepest attendance decline. Less than 15% of adults are affiliated with mainline denominations, Pew reports.

"In terms of 'sacrifices,' there were many members who chose to leave Grace because of this decision (to be fully inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community)," Rev Cort remembered. "Which can be expected.

It isn't always easy to get the word out about affirming churches (though Grace, Market Square, and other area congregations do so at events like Pride Festival of Central PA).

Over exposure can also be problematic.

"We've become known as 'the gay church,'" Rev. Cort said. "And even more so now that I - an out lesbian - am the pastor. This has had two different effects. Firstly, we might not be invited to join with other local communities of faith in events or ministries. Second is that once we became known as 'the gay church,' we had to work harder to convince heterosexuals that they are welcome here."

But both ministers only see growth in their pews - especially in spirit and purpose.

"I believe that we have moved just that much closer to the Kingdom of God by being intentionally and visibly invitational to the LGBTQIA community," Rev. Cort said. "Each new member enriches our congregation."

When asked if there had been a price paid for Market Square's affirming stance, Rev. Waint said "it's worked in the opposite way for us."

"A large percentage of the church are LGBT members or have family members who are LGBT or people who love inclusiveness," she explained. "Couples who have a new baby want them to grow up in a place like that. It's growing because of that."

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Helping with Pride Helps Out at Central Pennsylvania Food Bank

"We want to raise the profile of the LGBT community in a positive manner," Helping with Pride founder Travis Woodward (second row, center) tells *Central Voice*. The volunteer organization assists with community service projects. On Nov. 16 volunteers prepared food items at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, where the group previously had helped to bag 1,200 pounds of green beans. The Food Bank distributes more than 48 million pounds of food and grocery products, equivalent to more than 40 million meals, every year to more than 900 soup kitchens, shelters, and food pantries in 27 central Pennsylvania counties. Organizations that have also benefitted include: Central PA Animal Alliance bagging shoes project for the Alliance's Shoes for Shelter's Campaign, Dillsburg Community Library, American Red Cross Smoke Detector Installation, and Highway Cleanup, Adopt a Highway.

Animal Advocates *continued from page 1*

Williams feels that "humans exploit animals in so many ways, it is unfathomable."

Sixty billion land animals are bred and slaughtered every year just for consumption, William notes. That number doesn't include, she says, trillions of sea creatures caught for food or the millions used in research, for fashion, in pet breeding operations and killed for sport."

The majority of killed animals "are babies, from a few hours to a few weeks old – but even so, none of them deserve their suffering," Williams argues.

Williams acknowledges many people think society should solve human population problems "before we can even begin to dive into other issues." However, she says, "so many problems associated with consuming and using animals can be controlled, even solved, if we start to look at the bigger picture.

For example, Williams advises that we start living more consciously and compassionately to slow down climate change. Choosing a vegan diet, part of the organization's tagline, uses significantly less resources.

"Overall health would improve with people eating more nutrient dense plant foods," Williams claims.

"World hunger could be a thing of the past considering 82% of starving children live in countries where food is fed to animals, and the animals are eaten by western countries."

Do animals have the same rights as human beings?

"Animals, unlike humans, do not need rights that protect their freedom of speech or freedom to bear arms – simply put, they should have the right to not be used," Williams explains.

"Just as people are not property – animals are not 'things', Williams says.

"Animals are thinking, feeling individuals that deserve the right to their own bodies and lives. Like us, every animal values their life and wants to be happy and free of suffering. They have families, friends, communities, likes and dislikes – humans and non-human animals are alike in more ways than we are different. We need to learn how to share this planet, it does not belong to any one particular species, therefore, we must take care of it and of each other," Williams argues.

The group receives "an overwhelming positive response" when they York's Equality Fest and Harrisburg's Go Green in the City.

Williams meets "so many present vegans and vegetarians from the area, which has surprised me!"

Maybe *Curve* magazine and DePrisco are right – animals, vegan, pets and the LGBT community is a match made in Heaven.

Trump Team Gives "Assurances" On Religious Freedom Amendment

Dominic Holden, national LGBT reporter for *BuzzFeed News,* reports that Rep. Steve Russell was disappointed that his religious freedom amendment was stripped from a federal defense-spending bill the House passed in late November. But the Oklahoma Republican is encouraged he will prevail in the long-term, telling *BuzzFeed News* that the incoming Trump administration has given him "very good assurances" it would address the issue upon taking office.

"These issues will be resolved, and we have gotten some very good assurances moving forward," Russell said at the Capitol, suggesting Trump could take executive action without waiting for Congress. "I am certainly encouraged by the signs that I am getting from the administration that is inbound."

Russell said he has "gotten very positive signals" that Trump team would step in where his amendment was blocked, but added that he was not going "to talk strategy or predispose what the executive branch may do," specifically, on the matter.

Dubbed the Russell Amendment, Russell's religious freedom legislation became a lightning rod this year for Democrats, who said it would let religiously affiliated federal contractors discriminate against LGBT people.

They argued Russell crafted the measure to undermine President Obama's 2014 executive order that banned LGBT discrimination by federal contractors.

In an interview, Russell did not deny that Obama's LGBT order was his target, arguing the order threatened contracts for Catholic organizations and other religiously affiliated groups.

Advocates worry the Russell Amendment would permit corporations that make even a superficial claim of religious belief to discriminate against LGBT people.

Amendment sponsor Rep. Steve Russell

"The vagueness was created by the executive branch, so the executive branch [under Trump] could un-create the vagueness," he said. "You reverse it by clarifying a bad executive order with a good one."

The Russell Amendment would have ensured religious tenets would not be an impediment to federal contracts for religious corporations, religious associations, religious educational institutions, or religious societies.

LGBT advocates worried it would permit corporations that make even a superficial claim of religious belief to discriminate against LGBT people within the company, or to deny services to customers, while still receiving taxpayer money.

Rep. Adam Smith, the ranking Democratic member on the House Armed Services Committee, was on a conference committee of four lawmakers who stripped the Russell Amendment from the the defense funding bill. The committee's two Republicans, Sen. John McCain and Rep. Mac Thornberry, were not necessarily opposed to the amendment, he said, but saw an opening in the future.

"The were confident they would have a better environment for a variety of different issues in the new administration," Smith told *BuzzFeed News*. "It worries me a great deal."

McCain declined to comment on why the Russell Amendment was stripped from the National Defense Authorization Act in an interview with *BuzzFeed News*, but he said he was open to similar legislation in the future.

"As a general outlook, I think those religious-based organizations should be allowed to make decisions that are in keeping with their religious beliefs," the Arizona Republican said.

As *BuzzFeed News* reported in October, LGBT advocates have been worried that Trump could reverse LGBT rights in several ways upon taking office, including rescinding Obama's 2014 order or expanding on a 2002 order by president George W. Bush to protect the religious rights of religious social service groups.

Trump's transition team did not immediately respond to a request to comment on whether it has given assurances to expand the religious freedom rights of federal contractors.

Rep. Jordan Harris

New Leadership for PA Legislative Black Caucus

Calling it an extreme honor to have the opportunity to be a strong voice for African-Americans and people of color across the commonwealth, state Rep. Jordan Harris, D-Phila., was recently elected to serve as the chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus.

"Being elected to serve as the chairman of the PLBC comes with both tremendous honor and tremendous duty," Harris said. "It is the job of the PLBC to be a voice for African-Americans and people of color across Pennsylvania, and as the chairman that is a job I will not take lightly. As we've seen since last Tuesday's election, we have a long way to go to ensure that African-Americans and minorities are equally represented and respected, and I look forward to doing my part to ensure that happens in Pennsylvania."

The PLBC leadership team is further made up of Rep. Donna Bullock, D-Phila., vice chairwoman; Sen. Art Haywood, D-Phila./Montgomery, secretary; and Rep.-elect Chris Rabb, D-Phila., treasurer.

"It's an honor to be a voice for Pennsylvania's black community as a member of the PLBC's new leadership team in Harrisburg," Bullock said. "I thank my colleagues and constituents for their trust in me. Our nation is deeply divided and deeply hurting right now. Conversations about race, criminal justice reform, economic opportunity and education in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and beyond are critical to the healing process. As these conversations happen in the state legislature and across our commonwealth, I hope to be a strong voice for my community."

"We have a great challenge to meet," Haywood said.

The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus was founded in 1973 by House Majority Leader K. Leroy Irvis, who would go on to become the first African-America speaker of the House. Its purpose is to serve as an information and advocacy vehicle to advance the interests of African-American, Latino, and other minority residents of Pennsylvania. Other notable founding members included Rep. David P. Richardson, Rep. Hardy Williams and Rep. Lucien Blackwell.

The PLBC also awards annual scholarships to students based on academic and leadership credentials. The scholarships are awarded to Pennsylvania African-American students who will be attending Pennsylvania institutions of higher education.

Home is where the hate is?

HGTV is standing by the hosts of its popular home renovation series "Fixer Upper."

The channel issued a response after BuzzFeed reported that Chip and Joanna Gaines attend a church whose pastor has spoken out against same-sex marriage, and raised the question of whether gay couples would be welcome on the show.

"We don't discriminate against members of the LGBT community in any of our shows," the network said in a statement to The Post. "HGTV is proud to have a crystal clear, consistent record of including people from all walks of life in its series."

As the site reported, "Fixer Upper," which recently returned for its fourth season, has never featured an LGBT couple, though other HGTV series like "House Hunters" and "Property Brothers" have.

BuzzFeed's initial report centered on the Gaineses being members of the Antioch Community Church, "a nondenominational, evangelical, mission-based megachurch" whose pastor, Jimmy Seibert, has been an outspoken critic of same-sex marriage. The story did not specifically confirm that the HGTV hosts shared that belief, only that Seibert has described them as "dear friends."

The story has sparked harsh backlash from Christians and others in the media, alleging that the Gaineses are being persecuted for their faith.

COMMENTARY

Pittsburgh Lesbian Murdered: "We Have To Do Better"

By Sue Kerr

Her name was Shanique Sanders. She was 23 years old and a resident of Homestead. Nov. 30, she became the latest fatality in the epidemic of violence when her body was found at 1:45 PM on McKinley Street in the Knoxville neighborhood of Pittsburgh. She had been shot at least one time when she was found and transported to UPMC Mercy where she later died

Shanique used the name Loyalty Fashigg in social media and selfidentified as a stud, according to local LGBT activist Amber Sloan who was a friend and mentor to Shanique. Amber told me that Shanique was born in Garfield, grew up in Homewood and was a graduate of Westinghouse High School.

Amber has been talking for a long time about the lack of resources and supports for young studs in Pittsburgh as well as the increasing incidents of harassment and violence. There is no organization or programming specifically tailored to the needs of this young community and a lack of cultural competency winds around the existing youth programming. Amber is the founder and organizers of M.A.D.E. I.T. (Making Alternative Decisions Effectively Impacting Teens)

In 2013, several stud identified women were targets of an assault at the former Margaritaville bar on the South Side, generating a call for the City's public safety and nightlife coordinators to demonstrate more competency and understanding about gender and racial dynamics when responding to these situation. Throwing everyone out of the bar just puts the victims at further risk.

This past October, a 15 year old student at Carrick High School named Sammyah Turner and her mother claimed that Sammyah was turned away from her homecoming dance in part due to her masculine style attired. The school vigorously disputes the allegations with the principal claiming her feelings were hurt and bring gay identified students to the table to talk with the media. There was zero attention on the needs and lived experiences of studs in the Pittsburgh Public Schools OR the ways in which those experiences contribute to their academic and behavior records.

What we do end up with is an equation that reduces young queer women of color to a byproduct of their socalled choices – the choose to misbehave and lose privileges, they choose to stand up to men harassing their femme friends in bars and get assaulted, they choose to be involved with people connected to drugs and get shot in the street in the middle of the afternoon.

While we choose to diminish their experiences and reframe their deaths in a racist narrative that absolves of any accountability for this epidemic and the particular manifestation of misogynoir in the queer and trans community. More on that later.

Since 2013, we have lost at least FIVE young QTPOC [Queer Trans People Of Color] to gun violence in Pittsburgh. Two of them must remain nameless because one was a minor whose family has not consented to the disclosure and the other was not fully out.

FIVE is an epidemic, Pittsburgh. Omar Islam, 21, October 2013. Andre Gray, 33, October 2014. Unnamed individual, 33, 2014. Unnamed individual, under 18, 2016. Shanique Sanders, 23, November 2016

According to Public Source, 85% of all homicides in the City of Pittsburgh between 2010 and 2015 had a black victim. The majority of those crimes are not solved. With regard to the five QTPOC I referenced, there have been convictions or charges filed in four of the five. But how many other members of our community go unnoticed in this avalanche of data because we never know their true identity?

We have to do better. We have to listen to 15 year olds describing an educational experience that is hampered by peer response to their stud identity and do something, not allow the schools to rest on their laurels meeting the needs of other LGBTQ students. We have to invest in programs led by people like Amber Sloan and other studs to provide resources and opportunities for our young sisters so they have choices and options and access to the privileges we often take for granted. We have to raise the bar for cultural competency among all providers serving LGBTQ youth and affirm with certainty that they are truly safe and welcoming spaces for stud identified young women. More on that later.

Reports indicate five or six people running away from Shanique while she lay dying on the street. Anyone who has information is asked to call Pittsburgh police at 4123237161. Callers may remain anonymous.

Rest in power, Shanique. You were loved by so many and deserved to live your life to the fullest. We will continue to say your name and seek justice for your death.

Reports indicate five or six people running away from Shanique Sanders, 23, while she lay dying on McKinley Street in the Knoxville neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

Photo credit – KDKA/CBS2

Mazzoni Center Gets $1.5 Million for Building

Mazzoni Center recently received an award of $1.5 million through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). The funds are designated to support the purchase and renovation of a Center City building at Broad and Bainbridge Streets, where the agency will relocate and consolidate its core programs and services in summer 2017.

The RACP award represents the largest one-time gift in Mazzoni Center's history, and the largest amount ever awarded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to an organization with an LGBTQ-focused mission. The grant demonstrates the growing commitment and collaboration between the State of Pennsylvania and the LGBTQ community.

"We are thankful to Governor Wolf for his support of this important project, and for understanding the impact it will have in addressing critical health disparities and establishing a first-class home for LGBTQ health and well-being in the heart of Philadelphia. We are deeply grateful and indebted to State Senator Larry Farnese for believing in this project and the work that we do, for championing the application in the PA Senate and for being our advocate with the Governor. Thanks also go to State Representative Brian Sims, for publicly supporting the grant request, and serving as our primary PA House liaison," said Mazzoni CEO Nurit Shein.

"By expanding our physical capacity and reducing overhead costs," Shein added, "the new building will enable us to provide essential, life-changing care and services to the individuals who need us most, to innovate and meet the increased demand for our various services, and to manage our internal growth in a sustainable way."

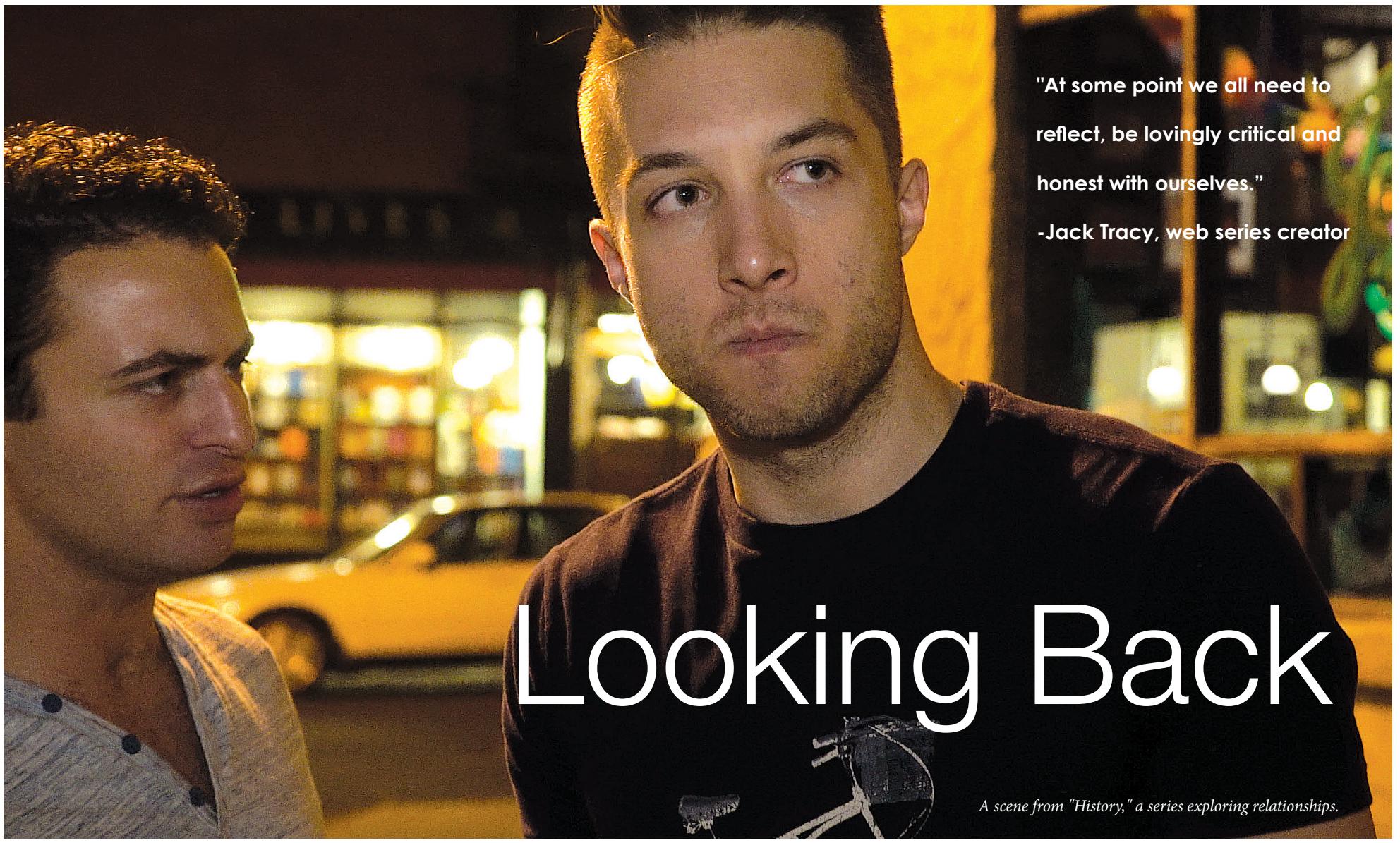
"These funds are a much welcomed recognition and support as we embark on our major gifts campaign," said Mark Blecher, MD, Chair of Mazzoni Center's Building Committee. "With the RACP grant, we have secured over $3.8 million, and we are closing the gap to our goal of $6 million by 2022. I am confident that members of our community as well as allies will partner with us and offer their support for this exciting and transformational project."

What's a journalist to do?

The Associated Press has issued an advisory on use of the term "alt-right" for newspapers and magazines.

Advisory: "Alt-right" (quotation marks, hyphen and lower case) may be used in quotes or modified as in the "self-described" or "so-called alt-right" in stories discussing what the movement says about itself.

Avoid using the term generically and without definition, however, because it is not well known and the term may exist primarily as a public-relations device to make its supporters' actual beliefs less clear and more acceptable to a broader audience. In the past we have called such beliefs racist, neo-Nazi or white supremacist.



A scene from "History," a series exploring relationships.

Looking Back

Lancaster Native Produces Web Series "History"

By Frank Pizzoli

Lancaster native Jack Tracy, creator of "History," a web series exploring relationships, friendships and the sexual and gender politics of young gay men in New York City.

"'History' is based on my personal experiences, generalized in ways others can relate to and find themselves," Lancaster native Jack Tracy, 33, tells *Central Voice*.

Now available online, "History" is a new LGBTQIA, NYC-based web series. All six episodes of explore the relationships, friendships and the sexual and gender politics of young gay men in New York City.

A JC McKaskey graduate, Tracy is also a graduate of Pennsylvania State University and Seton Hall University School of Law. He is series executive producer, writer, director and lead actor.

The script follows Jamie (Tracy), a thirty-something gay New York lawyer, in the days after a messy breakup with his partner of five years, Jared (Andrew Lipson). Through flashbacks, the audience watches Jamie's evolution—or lack thereof—on issues of intimacy, sex, gender role conformity and friendships as he rebuilds his life on his own terms.

"The script's through line is me looking at my own history, roses and warts," Tracy explains. "At some point we all need to reflect, be lovingly critical and honest with ourselves," he says.

The emotional energy behind Tracy's work reflects changes set into motion after a five-year relationship. "A new home, new job, old friends lost, your world collapses," he shares. Setting out anew, "I think many of us find out about our vulnerabilities, how to navigate an online social and dating world."

As the series progresses, Tracy explores unabashedly how for some men "sex is a weapon, not an expression of love or caring". He also portrays how, especially with social dating apps, how identity has morphed into "retail," the selling of oneself online via a glossy pic or bicep shot. Filtered into the scripts is an awareness of "the end of the binary," in which individuals identify as cis male or cis female. "It's fluid these days," Tracy says.

The cast was chosen from a talented and diverse pool of New York actors. William Cohen (William) is graduate of NYU with a major in vocal performance. Jacob Seidman (Matthew) most recently performed on Carnival and Holland America cruise lines. Trent Stone (Ted) has appeared in numerous stage productions, as well as television and film; his most recent being the feature "The Killer in the House". Robert Maitner (Gio) recently originated the role of "Les" in the Off-Broadway production of "A Better Place" at the Duke Theater. "History" also welcomes Andrew Lipson (Jared) and is very happy to introduce Bianca Lyn (Bianca) and Carissa Fales (Catherine) in their web debuts. The supporting cast includes: Pierre Coker; Andrew Holder; Aidan Kinney; Robert Lima; Mike Longo; Miguel Lopez; Scott Mandel; Anna Bella Michelino; Cameron Moir; Misha Osherovich; Chad Peterson; John Pigate; and Kevin Stevens.

Why a web series?

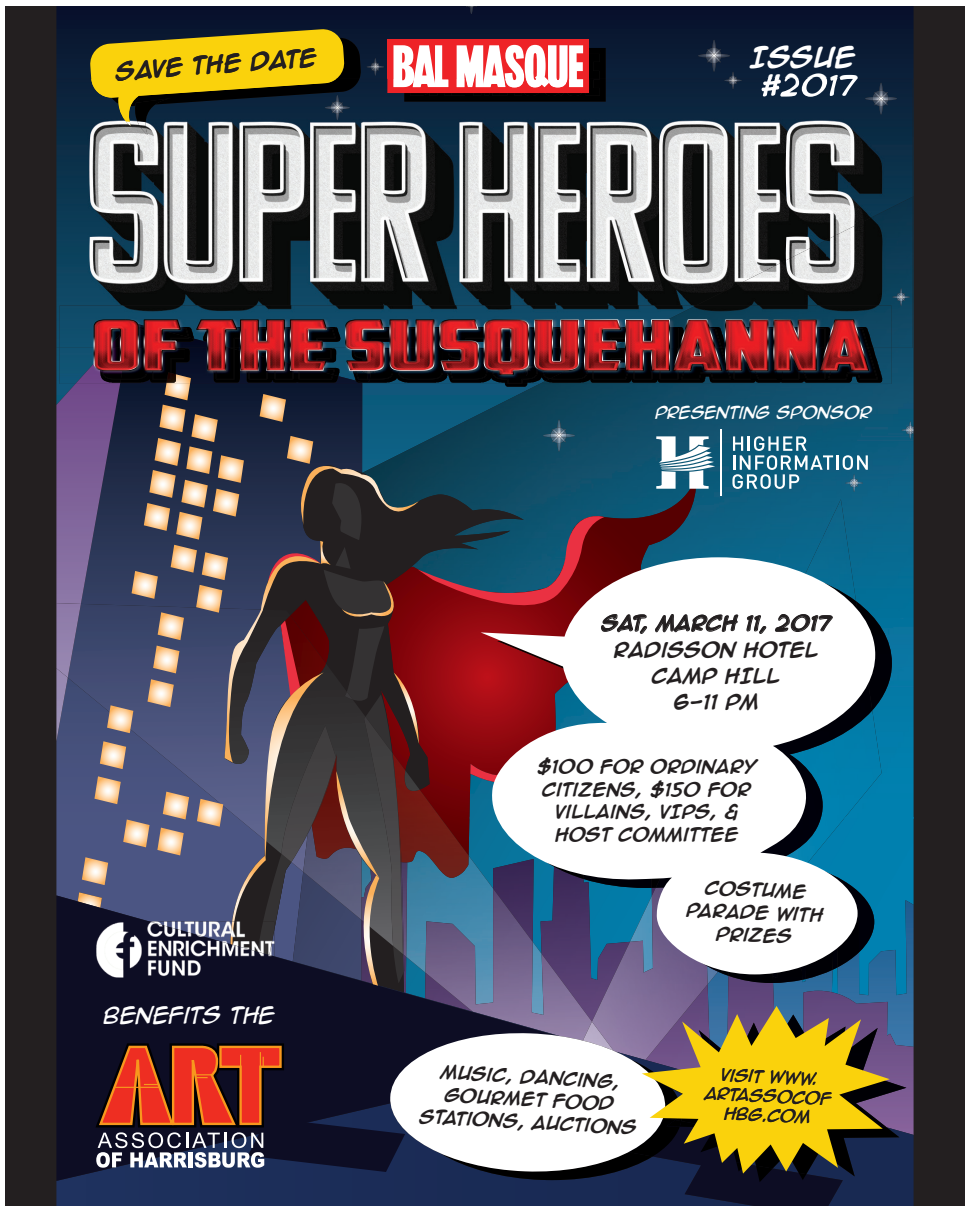
"I needed a creative outlet," Tracy says. Enter Necessary Outlet Productions, which he launched a year ago.

Necessary Outlet's goal is to assemble trained, talented, motivated and multi-disciplined artists to contribute to large-scale projects. Artists involved with NO typically volunteer their time in exchange for experience, relationship-building, skill-honing and resume material.

Proceeds from productions have been used to reimburse expenses only, with any remainder donated to an LGBTQIA-based charity. Necessary Outlet's last production was the sold-out cabaret "more" at The Duplex Cabaret Theatre in March 2016. All proceeds from the performance were donated to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

Tracy is hard at work developing new story lines for a second series in 2017.

Find: HistoryWebSeries.com



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Quakertown Author Writes about Romance and Murder

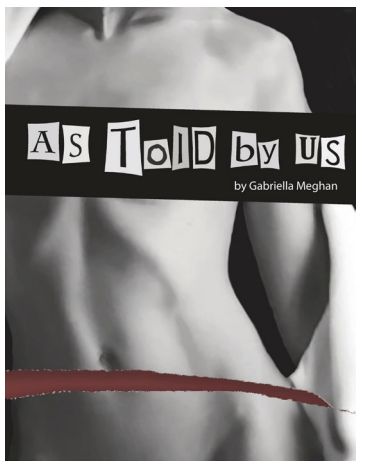
INTERVIEW WITH GABRIELLA MEGHAN

By Tom Tietjen

In her debut novel, Quakertown, Pennsylvania author Gabriella Meghan writes a captivating story of romance and murder, set in a small-town lesbian community.

As Told to Us tells the story of Layla, who, after four years of being bullied in high school, seeks to discover herself and come to terms with her true identity. She quickly becomes the town's "It Girl", experiencing love and lust as she weaves her way in and out of relationships with an assortment of young women. But just as she is thriving in her new-found freedom, a string of mysterious suicides among her inner circle of friends threatens to lead Layla toward a twisted journey of undeniable fate.

The story is based on author Gabriella Meghan's own experiences, living and loving in a world she describes as harsh, chaotic and malicious. It explores a darker side of the lesbian community that many may be surprised to learn about: rampant with sex, addiction and mental illness.



Do you worry As Told By Us may give a negative impression of the lesbian community?

I like to think that the book is eye-opening to the realities individuals within the community face every-day.

Would you say its true-to-life?

It is certainly true to life of the community I experienced. The community I experienced was very small and dysfunctional.

Why do you think that was?

My theory is that LGBTQ people have learned to hide who they are by lying to loved ones for fear of being an outcast. We've become better at lying and hiding things, and that makes it easier to be malicious.

Did you base your main character, Layla, on yourself?

Layla's experiences and life are strongly based on my own. Layla and I both went through many changes and obstacles in our late teens and early twenties including divorce, coming out, rebelling, struggling with an eating disorder, being in and breaking free from an abusive relationship, death of friends and more.

Are Layla's lovers based on your real life lovers?

Yes, very much so. I based the character of Jade off an extremely toxic yet passionate relationship I was in. It was abusive in more ways than one, and I didn't realize it while I was in it. I only started to realize the abuse and the intensity of it once I began therapy a few years down the road. A lot of my fears, anxieties, and insecurities stem back to her.

Does your ex still control you?

It was that kind of relationship where no matter how much time goes by, if I see her today, I know she will have an immediate hold on my soul. But I realize I can control those feelings, acknowledge them, and move forward with my life in a positive manner. In a way I am thankful to have had a Jade in my life. I learned a lot of valuable lessons, I became stronger, and I learned that I am capable of accomplishing anything. I have forgiven that person and moved on to a healthy relationship and happy life.

Did you find writing the book to be therapeutic?

As Told By Us was my therapy before therapy! Before ever seeking out a therapist to talk to, I wrote. The book allowed me to tackle the demons of that period of my life. It allowed me to self-reflect, which I think is so incredibly important in order to grow into a better person.

What are your feelings today about the lesbian community?

There are times I miss the chaos, and there are times that I am thankful I made it out in one piece. This past year I travelled to a lot of the United States, met tons of new people, and learned the lesbian community is so much bigger than what I experienced in my small town. Its restored my faith in the community.

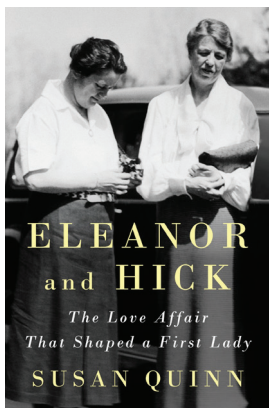
What do you hope readers take away from As Told By Us?

I think it is important that we talk about the hardships that many LGBTQ youth go through with drugs, alcohol and addiction. We shouldn't pretend these problems don't exist. Addiction is a serious thing, and we should address it and work together as a community to fight it.

The Other Roosevelt Love Affair

BOOK REVIEW:

By Frank Pizzoli



We like our history in a straight line. Yet time and again twists and turns throw us off.

Sue Quinn's remarkable new book *Eleanor and Hick: The Love Affair That Shaped a First Lady* helps readers unravel the complicated, but loving, relationship between Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Associated Press reporter Lorena Hickok, known as a lesbian during her professional years.

Quinn's account is based on the letters between Eleanor and Hick, as she was known, released 40 years ago, in 1977, 10 years after her death as called for by Eleanor's estate. Hickok covered Eleanor during the last months of FDR's 1932 presidential campaign, when, according to Doris Kearns Goodwin in *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II,* she "fell madly in love with her". At the1933 inauguration, Eleanor wore a sapphire ring Hickok had given her.

Herein is the significance of Quinn's contribution to the Roosevelt canon: She ably dismantles the first book written after release of the sumptuous letters.

In 1980 author Doris Faber, who was, Quinn says, "shocked" at the letters' content in her account of their relationship in The Life of Lorena Hickok: E.R.'s Friend. Faber denies any sexual dimension between the women. In fact, when their letters were released in 1977 and Faber began her manuscript work, she begged librarians to seal them back up. That two women – a First Lady – might have a passionate relationship was just too much for her. Researcher Leila J. Rupp criticized Faber's argument, calling her book "a case study in homophobia" and arguing that Faber unwittingly presented "page after page of evidence that delineates the growth and development of a love affair between the two women".

"Attitudes change. I re-examined their relationship. After all, they gave each other satisfaction and joy," Quinn tells Central Voice.

Hickok encouraged Eleanor to hold her own press conferences for women journalists. To turn her daily letters to her into Eleanor's famous "My Day" newspaper column. "Hick helped Eleanor find her voice," Quinn explained.

When their relationship flourished many female activists in the Democratic Party of the 1930s were lesbian. "Women who loved women were all around Eleanor," Quinn says.

And Eleanor did have her challenging sorrows.

Hired in 1914, her social secretary Lucy Mercer and FDR kindled a relationship thought to have first sparked in 1916. In 1918, Franklin travelled to Europe to inspect naval facilities for World War I. He returned sick with pneumonia in both lungs. That's when Eleanor discovered a packet of love letters from Mercer in his suitcase. She offered him a divorce which he refused. FDR's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, was adamantly against their divorcing, sure it would end his political career. She threatened to cut him off from the family fortune if he chose to do so.

Goodwin summarized their letters thus: Hick longed to kiss the soft spot at the corner of Eleanor's mouth; Eleanor yearned to hold Hick close; Hick despaired at being away from Eleanor; Eleanor wished she could lie down beside Hick and take her in her arms. Day after day, month after month, the tone in the letters on both sides remains fervent and loving. She concluded, however, that "whether Hick and Eleanor went beyond kisses and hugs" cannot be known for certain, and that the important issue is the impact the close relationship had on both women's lives. In contrast, a 2011 essay by Russell Baker reviewing two new Roosevelt biographies in the *New York Times Review of Books* stated, "That the Hickok relationship was indeed erotic now seems beyond dispute considering what is known about the letters they exchanged."

Eleanor also had a known relationship with FDR's bodyguard, Earl Miller. They swam together, went horseback riding, long drives. No one knows for sure if they were sexual.

"The relationship between Eleanor and Hick was very important to both of them," Quinn says. "It was a deep and loving relationship".

Readers can decide for themselves how to label Eleanor and Hick's love for each other. History is not a straight line.

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FIVE IRISH TENORS
Wednesday, March 8, 2017 @ 7:30 pm
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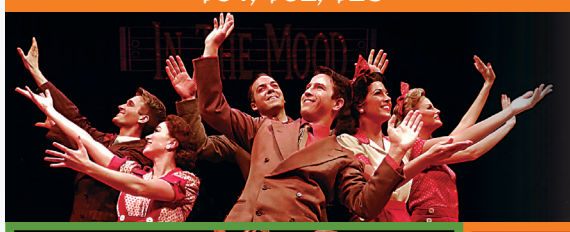

IN THE MOOD, A 1940 MUSICAL REVUE
Friday, April 7, 2017 @ 7:30 pm
$45, $39, $33

GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS
Friday, March 31, 2017 @ 7:30 pm
$45, $39, $33

COLIN MOCHRIE & BRAD SHERWOOD
Friday, May 12, 2017 @ 7:30 pm
$59, $49, $39

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Keith Haring's iconic work portrayed along NYC's fifth Avenue last holiday *Central Voice photo*

Keith Haring's Sister Kay Fondly Remembers the Artist and the Boy

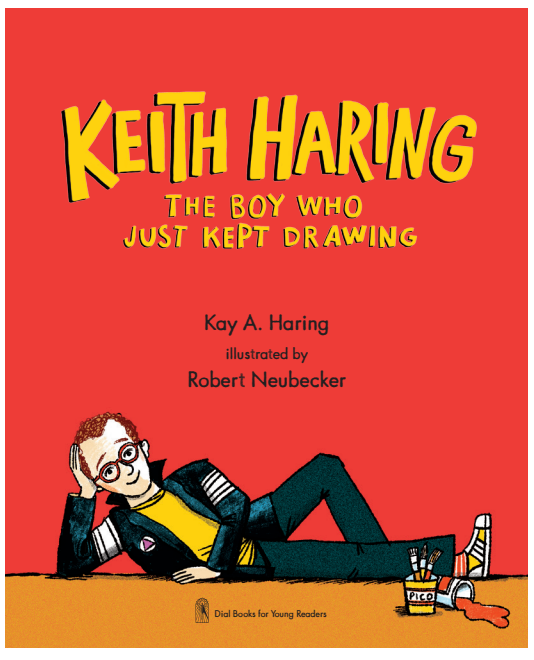
By Frank Pizzoli

"I really want to make sure that Keith is remembered as the generous person that he was," Kay Haring says of her brother Keith Haring, celebrated worldwide for his iconic art before his death in 1990.

Written by Kay, *Keith Haring: The Boy Who Kept Drawing*, a 40-page hardcover book will "illustrate for children, teach them, about Keith and the many ways he helped others" Kay tells *Central Voice*. The inside cover will also portray his artwork.

Kay is Keith's younger sister who has devoted many years to working in the nonprofit field and has held board positions with Lehigh Valley Arts Council, Berks Arts Council, Reading Musical Foundation, and AAA Reading/Berks. Kay lives in southern California. This is her first book.

In the 26 years since his death, Haring's incredible and profound influence in the art world has never wavered. His creations are still taught in elementary and middle schools as a colorful and fun introduction to the pop art movement. Kay's book is a wonderful origin story of how the modern art legend came to be.



The picture book biography follows the iconic artist from his days doodling in his childhood home to his meteoric rise as one the most influential artists of the late '70s and '80s. The biography sheds light on Keith's great humanity, his concern for children, and his disregard for the establishment art world. The book features reproductions of Keith's signature artwork throughout its pages.

"My family always said there is a whole other side to Keith that is just as profound as his art," Kay explains as her motivation for writing the book. That side was his generous spirit portrayed in the book. "He gave so much to people, art work, volunteering, cleaning up streets," she explains.

Her brother's kind and giving spirit portrayed in the book will also live on even further. Kay is donating 25% of the book's proceeds to the Berks County Community Fund so that the funds can be used to teach kids about philanthropy. "My book signings are in museums and for the benefit of other non-profit organizations," Kay says.

"We always stayed a family," Kay says, even after her brother's success. He invited us to gallery and museum openings in New York City. He always made time to get back home to Kutztown.

Andy Warhol and Keith Haring *Photo by Ken Lig*

Recollections of Keith Haring

By Karey Maurice Counts

In an exclusive piece for Central Voice, artist Karey Maurice Counts tells readers in his own recollections his experiences of being mentored by Keith Haring.

80s Art Scene

"What I remember about this particular time was that I had just graduated from High School and my interest was more about fashion until I read about what was happening in New York City through magazines like *GQ, Interview, Paper Mag* and the *Village Voice*."

"In these articles, I read about the downtown art scene and that artists were curating exhibitions anywhere they could and nightclubs were very receptive towards these kind of shows. I soon began making visits to these clubs at night when I had enough money and I also started to explore galleries in the East Village and Soho to check out the artwork of artist that were featured in the publications I was reading.

'At first these artist seemed to be making art for their own personal reasons. Then Wall Street investors began to buy art just for the pure sake of investment, and that's when it became extremely competitive and a mad dash to become the richest or the most famous artist was infused into the scene. I tried to switch gears as fast as possible so I could get involved with what seemed at the time a sure thing to establish a career and get paid for your work.

Communal

"Fluid is a great word when you try to explain how communal the scene was. As long you hung out with the right people at the right club, you had the feeling of being next in line for *The Price is Right* or the next gallery stable call. I did the right club thing but I was really living in the moment and was too young to understand networking.

Warhol

"I love telling this story. My original plan was to meet Andy Warhol because I was really tracking his activities through the media and how he was hanging out with the very same artists who were beginning to become famous – Haring, Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat, of course, but there were others. On the day Andy died I thought my dream was over because I wanted him to help me like he helped the other artist. He seemed to be the reason for everyone's interest at the time because he was hanging out again after a quiet period and he represented business and making money.

Pop Shop

"I got invited to be in a photo shoot by one of the employees who worked at the Pop Shop who was about to drop a 45" inch single called "Crack is Wack". He suggested I show up because Keith might be there and that I should show him my artwork. The day I met Keith we were on site at the location of the photo shoot and he rode his bike right up to me and asked me for some of my beer that I was drinking and I handed him the bottle. We did the photo shoot and after that I showed him some of my work and he invited me to the studio.

Haring Studio

"During the time in which I met Keith, a typical day was busy, busy, busy. That guy was incredible and he really taught me how to not waste time. There was always something going on at the studio. I'm glad that I was there during these times. It was really special because we could really talk about stuff. Because Keith trusted me, I became a runner for the Pop Shop and deliver merchandise to and for celebrities. I remember going to the bank with him to make these huge deposits of, like, $10,000 at one time.

"The funniest thing that happened while I was there involved designer Jean Paul Gautier. He was sitting on a garbage pail and the lid caved in on him and he was stuck inside the garbage for a minute. Keith was running around laughing saying 'Where's my camera? I can't believe I have a million dollar designer in my garbage'. At the time I didn't even know who Jean Paul was until I saw him on *Entertainment Tonight* the following week with the same striped jersey he was wearing that day in Keith's studio.

"The most distinct thing that I can say about Keith Haring is that he believed in me the very first day we met which is more that I can say for most people in my life who expressed doubt when I made the decision to become an artist and live out what my inner voice has been telling me.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

SESAME STREET LIVE "LET'S DANCE!"
Hershey Theatre
January 15 - 17, 2016

Hosted by two live performers, Sesame Street Live "Let's Dance!" offers an up-close, interactive experience like you've never experienced before! You, the audience, are invited to dance as all of your favorite Sesame Street friends join you on the floor – dancing with fans of all ages! In addition to ongoing dance parties, Elmo uses his imagination to "Do the Robot," Cookie Monster teaches all 'feets' to dance, and Ernie shares the fun of dance with the Sesame Street favorite "Shake Your Head One Time." Favorite friends join the audience on the floor – dancing with fans, not just for them. It's Sesame Street Live like you've never experienced it before! Tickets: Hershey Theatre Box Office; 717-534-3405

COURT STREET CABERET 2016
Open Stage of Harrisburg
January 15 & 16, 2016 @8pm

Stuart Landon is back with his friends for another rousing rendition of Court Street Caberet! The best of Broadway and beyond - old and new favorites - is sure to please your ears and leave your toes tapping. Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

EARL DAVID REED
Whitaker Center
Sunoco Performance Theater
Feb. 20 - 7:30pm

"The Secret of My Unsuccess" Comedy Show. Earl David Reed's genius is the way he interacts with the crowd. He has a way of knowing just who to pick on to get the biggest laugh, and the audience loves it! The Las Vegas Review-Journal called him "...an urban Don Rickles!" And Don Rickles himself commented, "This guy works the room like a Vegas showgirl...funny without being offensive." Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

THE SELDOM SCENE
Strand Capitol Theatre
Jan. 16, 8 p.m.

Their legendary weekly DC-area residencies included bluegrass versions of country music, rock, and even classical pop. The band's popularity soon forced them to play more than once a week—but they continued to maintain their image as being seldom seen, and on several of their early album covers were photographed with the stage lights on only their feet, or with their backs to the camera. The Seldom Scene have performed at the White House many times, and continue to tour year-round. Tickets: 717-337-8200

Keystone State Gay Rodeo Association president Adam Romanik, left, and treasurer Mitchell Nancekivell, on a recent benefit ride. Marlene Kanuck is vice president, Michael Norman is secretary, and Jim Gallucci is a trustee.

Local Gay Rodeo a Go!

By Central Voice

Round 'em up cowgirls and cowboys!

Keystone State Gay Rodeo Association president Adam Romanik says the region's first Gay Rodeo is a go for June 24-25.

"We're going to have a lot of fun," beams Romanik.

Plans are in full swing for Keystone State Gay Rodeo the weekend of June 24-25. The association is a newly formed non-profit organization that supports and encourages a country lifestyle and rodeo type events.

The event is slated for the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex. Nearby hotels will serve as Host Hotels. The association is also planning for rodeo-related vendors.

"We'll have a big dance right there at the Farm Show Complex on the Saturday night of the weekend," Romanik says.

Romanik and his committee have been busy raising funds to seed the event. "We've held spaghetti dinners at Metropolitan Community Church, Harrisburg, drag shows, attended local Pride events," he explains. At one event, "the Rodeo Royalty" appeared.

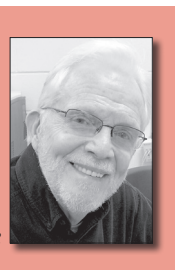
The local event will host about 30 contestants in various rodeo competitions.

Info: http://ksgra.org

Trump and The World We Live In

Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons
Harrisburg Area Community College



I'm still in a kind of shock and I'm trying to make the best of living in a Donald Trump presidency. I'm not the only person feeling this way, so I want to talk about how we can not only survive but also thrive over the next few years.

We have been thriving, you know. I'm talking about thriving in the sense of growing stronger: LGBTQ rights have been greatly enhanced, so much so that we've all had conversations about how fast the recent progress has been.

And now with a Trump presidency, all of us, including those of us who are allies, are saddened and afraid that the new administration will do all it can to send us backwards.

Indeed, all social juctice advocates have cause to be concerned. Week after week, month after month, the Trump presidential campaign attacked and alienated all those who are considered the "other." It was a terrible time for those of us who care deeply about all our brothers and sisters in this country.

The question of how to live in the time of a Trump presidency is secondary to the most important question for all human beings on this planet. How does one live in this world? How are we to live in an imperfect world where no matter how much any particular individual or social group thrives there are so many millions more who are living lives of pain and desperation?

Advocates of social justice fight so hard because we know the world is an unjust place to live and therefore the struggle must continue. We fight because the struggle has meaning, as Ta Na'Hesi Coates says in *Between the World and Me*.

As a romantic idealist I have had to find a way to live in a world that has knocked most of the naivete and innocence out of me, but not all. I lived in a fairly safe world (perhaps I should say bubble) until my early 20s, when all hell broke loose and my world view was turned upside down.

When people ask what it was like living in the late 1960s, I say Monday, Wednesday and Friday I was involved in the civil rights and antiwar struggle; Tuesday and Thursday it was all peace, love and some weed. Saturday and Sunday I had to flip a coin. I came out of those years with a new world view that put me right into the middle of the social justice fight. I understood more, felt more, embraced more.

And to this day I have learned to live in a world in which the glass is both half full and half empty. Life is full of chaos, ambiguity and paradox, and therefore complex and confusing.

We live in the eternal present, in which everything is going on all at once.

I am in a good place as I write this column while many of my sisters and brothers locally and worldwide are in a bad place. They don't have the luxury of taking time to think all this through as I do in the quiet of my warm home.

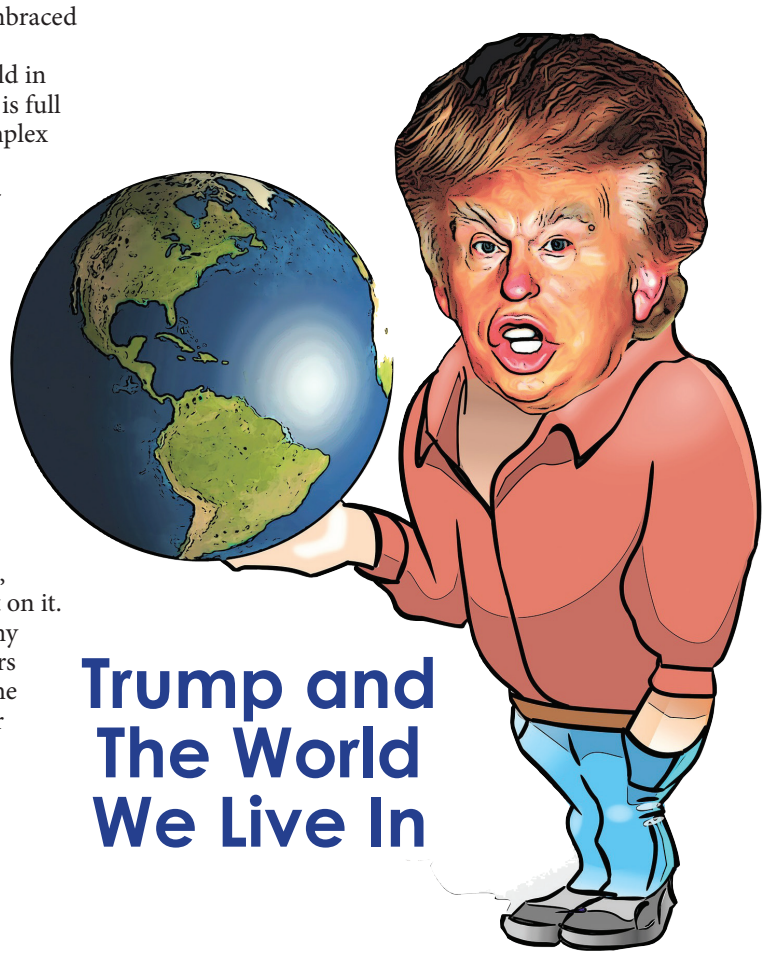
Is human nature good or bad? It is both, of course. Can you trust people? Well sure, except there are those you cannot trust as well. Is the world a wonderful place to live? Absolutely; it's also a terrible place to live.

Then there's the biggest question of all. Does love conquer hate? The bumper stickers say so. Well, some say *Love Trumps Hate,* just to put a finer point on it.

Here we are again talking about love, one of my favorite subjects. And as Ally in the Academy readers know, I like to use Scott Peck's definition: "Love is the willing extension of the self to promote one's own or another's spiritual growth." The way we will learn to thrive over the next few years is by practicing love in every way we can. Peck is only one of many fine thinkers who have pointed out that love is a verb; love is action.

There is no one way to practice love, so I'm not prescribing a particular course of action. Last November there were two group actions in Harrisburg protesting a neo-Nazi rally: a Unity Rally in one location and a counter-protest in another. Organizers of the two events took different tacks, and both were fine. Each thought their approach was best, and that's OK as long as no one was saying their way was the only way.

We may or may not be able to change the world, but we can change our immediate environment. This year let's fill all our interactions with those around us with love, the scariest four-letter word in the English language.



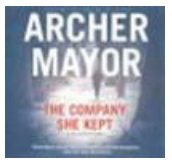
Mysteries with gay villains and crime fighters

Here are mysteries, some cozy and some dark, with gay villains and gay crime fighters. The Winter Reading Club starts in January; sign up online at dcls.org or at any branch to earn prizes for reading, listening and watching. We also have video games! DVDs now rent for free and you can stream movies and TV with your library card.

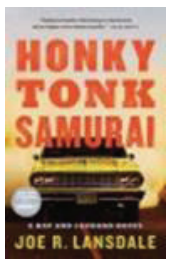
THE | DAUPHIN COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
LIBRARY
OPEN FOR DISCOVERY

BOOK REVIEWS

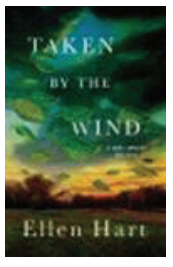
By Deborah Battisti
Dauphin County Library System
www.dcls.org



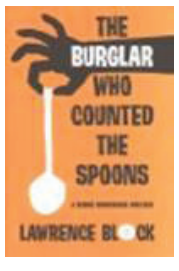
The Company She Kept
by Archer Major
A brutal murder during a cold, dark Vermont winter forces the governor of the state out of the closet and into a maelstrom of publicity.



Honky Tonk Samauri
by Joe R. Lansdale
Private investigators Hap, a former 60s activist and self-proclaimed white trash rebel and Leonard, a tough black, gay Vietnam vet are looking for Lilly Buckner's granddaughter, who disappeared while working at a car dealership that fronted a prostitution ring.



Taken by the Wind
by Ellen Hart
Jane Lawless, lesbian restaurateur and PI, is looking for the 13-year-old son of Eric and Andrew, who has been missing for over 24 hours. While his parents thought he ran away, Jane thinks he may have been abducted.



The Burglar Who Counted the Spoons
by Lawrence Block
"I love to steal" admits Bernie Rodenbarr, who with his lesbian sidekick Carolyn Kaiser, breaks into houses, apartments and even a museum to find buttons for a wealthy collector. He's also good at solving murders, helping NYPD Det. Ray Kirschmann solve the case of a woman found dead in her apartment after an apparent burglary.

The Dog Park Club
by Cynthia Robinson
Max Bravo, a wise-cracking gay opera singer, and his best friend, advertising whiz Claudia Fantini, enjoy hanging out at the local dog park. But when one of their friends--pregnant Amy Carter--disappears, Max and his visiting German boyfriend stake out Amy's house because they suspect her husband has killed her.

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COLOR

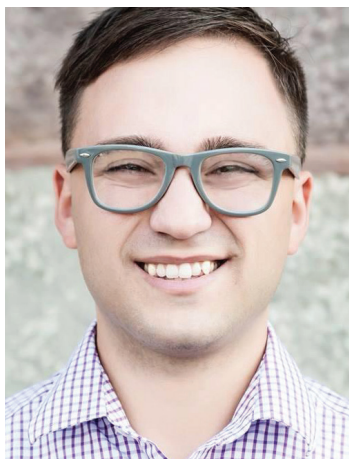
HERE'S WHAT THE REGION'S LGBT LEADERS HAVE TO SAY

ELECTION REACTION

"…guarantee that 'right of religious refusal' legislation will be a part of… first 100 days."
-Ted Martin, Equality PA

TED MARTIN

ADRIAN SHENKER



LOUIE MARVIN

HERE'S WHAT STATE SENATOR MIKE FOLMER HAD TO SAY:

In a live interview with Sen. Folmer on Press And Journal's Facebook feed, a reader asked:

What are your plans to work for the protection of equality and the rights of our LGBTQ and minority communities in the face of the new administration?

Excerpt from Folmer's response:
"We've been working closely with Sen. Pat Browne [on legislation that would extend anti-discrimination protections to the LGBT community.] So what we're doing right now is gathering our information and Sen. Browne was very pleased with the roundtables I held recently, a couple of months ago, where we met with the opponents and the proponents and the business community to try to find what we could do."

Footnote: Press And Journal Publications is the parent company of Central Voice.

Continued from page one

LGBT leaders to reflect on the election of Donald Trump as president.

"I really am unsure where Donald Trump stands on LGBT rights, but if the company he keeps is any indication we are in for dark days ahead," says Ted Martin, executive director, Equality PA.

Starting with his Vice President, Mike Pence, "Trump is building an administration that not only plans to set the clock back for LGBT people, but plans to bury it in the backyard. We all need to be prepared to fight," Martin forecasts.

Eventually overturned, Pence engineered last year's controversial Indiana anti-gay law. He supports "conversion therapy" and is on the record as saying his opposition to marriage equality is his way of supporting "God's law" rather than his being discriminatory.

Martin notes that Trump has publicly said he will sign a national version of Pence's law. "I can guarantee that 'right of religious refusal' legislation will be a part of this administration's first 100 days."

If Trump voters feel left out of America's economic prosperity of America, "I am sure those feelings are legitimate," Martin says. "It's unfortunate, however, that many of those people feel left out because of the basic human rights recently granted to the LGBT community. And that is just wrong."

"People are not in economic despair because LGBT people have marriage equality," Martin says and "Trump should not be using the LGBT community, people of color, immigrants, and women as scapegoats."

"We are just as affected by the swings of the economy. We would all be better off as country if our leaders would unify behind solutions that help everyone, not divide us to distract from the economic forces at play," Martin says.

Harry Young, president, Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, says, "At this point, it is difficult to say definitively the impact Trump's presidency will have on the LGBT community, especially in regard to civil rights."

"We must continue to unite to advance our rights regardless of our current political climate, and remember that there is still work to be done across to US to protect our community and achieve equality," Young says. "Pence has a dubious record regarding LGBT rights, so our continued unity as a community is of paramount importance."

"It's important we work with others to present a unified voice for civil rights…we are all entitled to basic human rights," Young says.

"It's too early to predict what the new administration's plans are," says Adrian Shanker, executive director, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center. "To be sure, Trump's prior comments about the LGBT community give us reason to be worried."

"But regardless of who holds public office, we will continue to fight to defend and expand the LGBT rights our community deserves," Shanker says.

Bill Burton, author of gay history articles for *Central Voice,* notes that during the campaign Trump said he would be a better choice for the LGBT community, voicing outrage over the Orlando attack. "But yet he surrounds himself with bigoted politicians and advisors like Pence and Steve Bannon, a "alt-right" leader and now his chief strategist.

With more zig-zags than a road race, divining Trump's policy position on any issue is difficult.

"When North Carolina first passed the controversial restroom legislation, Trump first said the state should leave the law the way it was," Burton points out. Then in May of 2016, Trump said "I believe it should be left to the states." A statement designed to sway conservatives during the campaign.

On marriage equality, Trump told Fox News in June of 2016 he would "strongly consider" appointing judges to overturn the Supreme Court's decision. Trump also stated during the campaign that he would sign the First Amendment Defense Act, which would protect discrimination on religious and moral grounds, and "prohibits action against anyone who believes or acts in accordance with a religious or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman."

But in a stunning reversal Nov. 13 on CBS, Trump stated he doesn't see the Supreme Court overturning marriage equality. "These issues have gone to the Supreme Court. They have been settled, and I am fine with that."

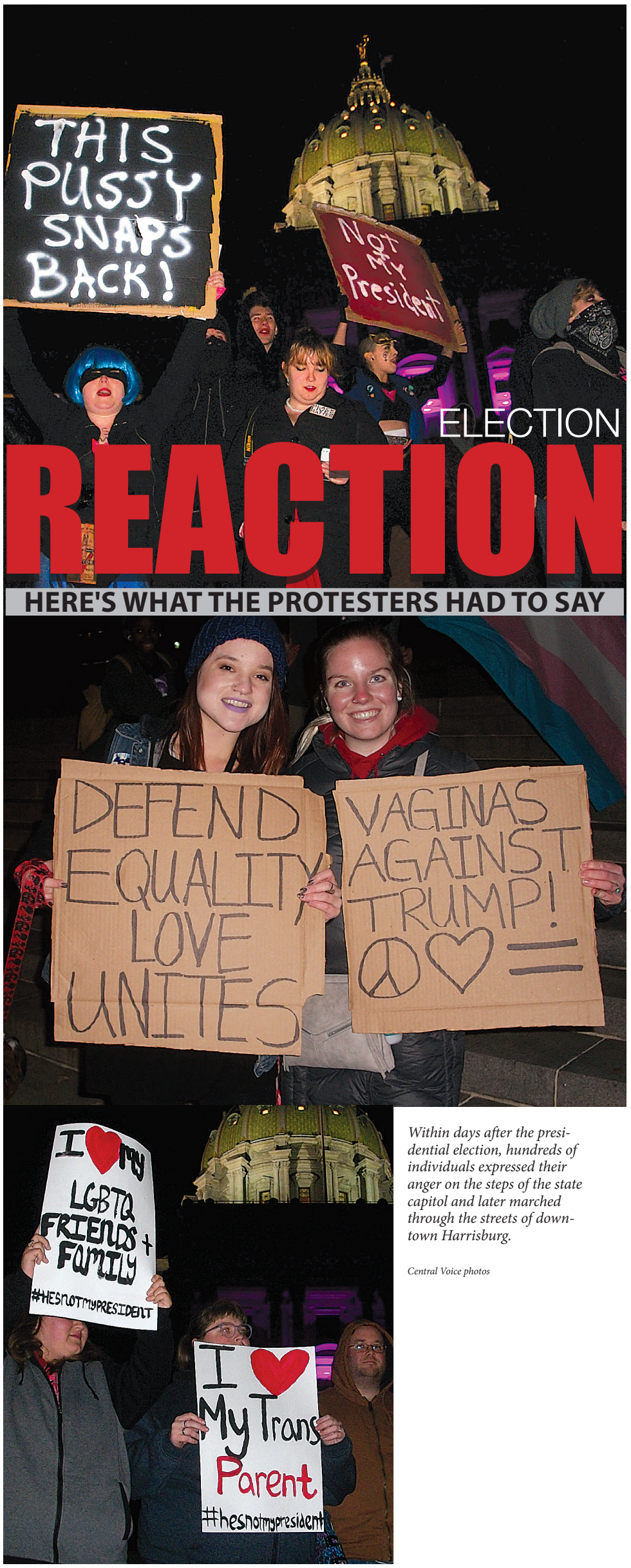
By campaign's end, Trump had issued a volley of hurtful remarks about Muslims, the disabled, and pro-choice women and men. Louie Marven, executive director, LGBT Community Center sees potential collaborations in the political landscape.

"If it wasn't clear before, it should be clear now that the people with the most to lose need to stick together to resist the impending attack on our civil rights, support each other's efforts inside and outside of electoral politics, and speak out against hate and violence," he says.

Like Martin, Marven understands "why someone who feels left out would want to vote for someone they perceive as being committed to tearing down a corrupt system." Still, he finds it "painful to see that overt racist and sexist comments were not disqualifying for so many people" who nonetheless voted for Trump.

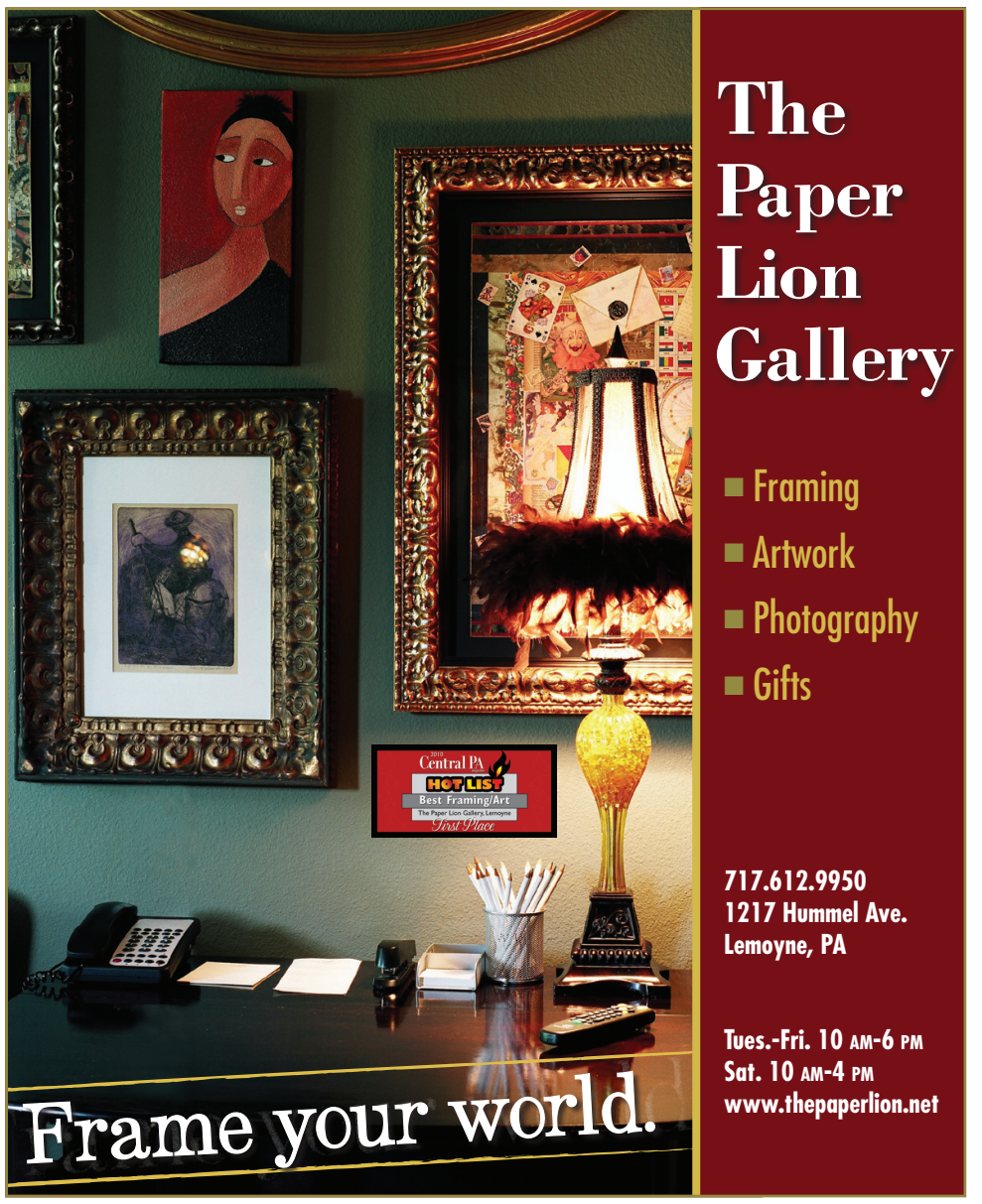
A consensus emerged within the remarks offered by leaders: The LGBT community "is "resilient and has what it takes to survive" should the new Republican Majority try to overturn civil rights gains made in recent years.

"But we can't be disengaged and hope that things will turn out okay -- we need to be active in securing each other's rights and safety," Marvin advises.



Within days after the presidential election, hundreds of individuals expressed their anger on the steps of the state capitol and later marched through the streets of downtown Harrisburg.

Central Voice photos



9 THINGS TRUMP COULD DO

While the post-election froth settled, *BuzzFeed* reporter Dominic Holden asked the important question: So what could Trump actually do to LGBT people, starting day one?

Excerpted from Holden's article –

Trump, without help from another branch of government, could erase or start to reverse several of Obama's orders, guidance, and regulations that protect LGBT people at work, at school, in health care, and inside their homes. In courtrooms, a Trump Justice Department could reverse the government's legal positions. While the government now argues LGBT discrimination is illegal in certain settings under civil rights laws, federal lawyers could argue that current law actually allows discrimination.

1 TRUMP COULD REPEAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS THAT PROTECT LGBT FEDERAL WORKERS AND CONTRACTORS.

Obama signed an executive order in July 2014 that protects two types of LGBT workers: those employed by the federal government and those who work for federal contractors.

The first portion expanded on an order by President Bill Clinton that banned discrimination against civilian federal workers for being gay, lesbian, or bisexual; Obama's 2014 order added transgender workers. The second portion expanded on an order by President Lyndon Johnson that banned federal contractors from discriminating on several bases; Obama's order added protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The rules affect countless people: The Office of Personnel Management reports the government employs about 2.6 million federal workers; the Congressional Budget Office says it's unclear just how many contractors the government employs.

Trump could rescind both orders.

2 TRUMP COULD WITHDRAW GUIDANCE THAT PROTECTS TRANSGENDER STUDENTS.

The Obama administration sent guidance to education providers that get federal money — including public schools and universities, plus institutions that receive grants — that said transgender students should be accommodated like other students with the same gender identity. This includes a letter from 2014 that covers how they handle allegations of sexual violence. In May, the administration sent guidance on providing transgender students equal access to restrooms, locker rooms, student housing, and athletics.

As a real-world example, it says schools must let transgender girls use the girls' restroom or risk losing funding.

Under Trump, the government could halt that appeal and drop the guidance altogether. Vice President-elect Pence has already said he and Trump plan to scotch it.

3 INSTEAD, TRUMP COULD ISSUE SCHOOL GUIDANCE THAT SAYS THE OPPOSITE.

To back up a bit, the current thinking behind the rules for transgender students goes like this: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 bans discrimination on the basis of sex. The Justice Department, Education Department, and some courts have found that law also covers gender identity — meaning students cannot be discriminated against because they are transgender.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals recently found the government has the right to make that interpretation of the law.

A new Trump administration, however, could make the opposite interpretation. Trump and his new attorney general could instruct agencies to issue new guidance that says Title IX does not apply to gender identity. They could argue it applies solely to birth sex.

In real-world terms: New guidance could say transgender boys should use the girls' room.

4 TRUMP COULD REINSTATE A BAN ON TRANSGENDER MILITARY SERVICE (and a ban on gay people in the military).

Obama signed a bill into law in 2011 repealing a ban on gay service members, and in June 2015, Defense Secretary Ash Carter followed up with a directive banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the military. In June, Carter allowed transgender service members to serve openly.

But under Trump, the military could do a U-turn.

"They could put in an outright ban on LGBT service in the military," said Sue Fulton, a former Army captain and president of SPARTA, a leading organization of LGBT military service members.

5 TRUMP COULD WITHDRAW GUIDANCE PROTECTING TRANSGENDER WORKERS AND STOP SUPPORTING THEM IN COURT.

The same way the Obama administration argues that existing civil rights laws protect transgender students, it makes the case that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects transgender workers — including in private employment.

The Obama administration issued a guide in June 2015 saying employers should let their transgender employees use facilities that match their gender.

This syncs with the government's legal position since 2014, when the Justice Department announced that it believed "sex discrimination" included transgender discrimination — and that it would take that argument to court.

The next administration could quickly drop this guidance and legal stance, while the president could also root out its underpinnings.

6 TRUMP COULD START REPEALING HEALTH CARE REGULATIONS.

Trump has been clear he wants the Affordable Care Act — aka Obamacare, which created rule 1557 — to be "amended, or repealed and replaced." The rule bans LGBT discrimination by a health care provider, insurer, or agency involved in the program. Among other features, the rule says the providers must provide transition-related care to transgender people.

It required a rule-making process to create that regulation; reversing it would, too. The Trump administration could start this immediately and complete it without approval from Congress.

7 TRUMP COULD ALSO REVERSE A RULE PROTECTING LGBT PEOPLE IN FEDERAL HOUSING.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development, which provides housing and runs programs to support it, issued a regulation in 2012 that bans LGBT discrimination in its programs. The agency followed up with another regulation in 2016 that applies those LGBT protections in HUD-backed shelters. The Trump administration could similarly reverse these regulations through the rule-making process.

8 TRUMP COULD EXPAND RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS FOR ENTITIES RECEIVING FEDERAL MONEY.

In December 2002, George W. Bush issued an executive order providing that federal agencies could not withhold funds from social service organizations simply because they are religious. However, Sen. Edward Kennedy said the rule was about more than making sure the charities got money — telling the New York Times at the time, "Under the new rule, organizations can accept public funds and then refuse to employ persons because they are Jewish, Catholic, unmarried, gay or lesbian."

LGBT advocates worry that if Trump indeed starts signing a pile of paperwork on day one, one document could be an executive order expanding on Bush's order. Such an order could allow the federal government to fund entities — from schools and health care providers to companies with federal contracts — that deny services or jobs to LGBT people because they have a religious objection. When Pence was the governor of Indiana, he was a leading champion of a religious freedom law that many critics said was designed to allow these same sorts of recusals.

9 TRUMP COULD UNDO OTHER REGULATIONS, GUIDANCE, AND PLANS.

The Obama administration has taken at least a dozen other regulatory and directive actions for LGBT people: dialing back a ban on gay men donating blood, appointing an LGBT liaison at the White House, making it easier for transgender people to change sex markers on their passports, collecting data on anti-LGBT hate crimes, sending a letter to schools encouraging them to allow allowing gay-straight alliances, and more.

16 PA Groups Unify to Prevent Rights Rollback

Many groups are concerned that LGBT rights may be on the chopping block in the new administration

Within days of the presidential election, groups representing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and allies released a unity pledge to fight against any rollbacks of LGBT rights in the coming years.

After a hard fought election cycle, many groups are concerned that LGBT rights may be on the chopping block in the new administration. These groups are pledging to fight to protect LGBT rights that have been so difficult to gain in recent decades.

The Unity Statement is:

A Unity Promise

We have never been more proud to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pennsylvanians. We have never been more committed as true allies to LGBT people and the cause of equality.

We will always reject politics fueled by hatred, racism, resentment, bigotry, and misogyny. And we know so many Pennsylvanians are with us. They are allies who are true supporters of fairness and equality and willing to take action and vote and speak about these issues.

We believe that Pennsylvania must always be a refuge of justice and opportunity for people of all walks, talks, ages and aspirations – regardless of how you look, where you live, what language you speak, or who you love.

LGBT Pennsylvanians and their allies have fought long and hard to pass local nondiscrimination ordinances, educate elected officials and the public about nondiscrimination and bullying and hate crimes and issues important to the health of everyone in the LGBT alphabet. Together we have stopped mean-spirited legislation set to punish same sex couples and their children and called-out those who would spread lies and hate about LGBT people. And we will continue to defend our people and our progress. We are not going to allow one election to reverse so much progress at the height of our historic diversity.

We will be reaching out to federal, state and local officials to evaluate how the new Administration in Washington, DC will potentially impact funding and recognition of ongoing state programs that ensure the health and well-being of LGBT Pennsylvanians, and federal enforcement of laws affecting the rights of people living in our state. We will maximize the time during the presidential transition to defend our accomplishments using every tool at our disposal.

Our values and our commitment to fighting for fairness and equality have not changed. America is greater than any one elected leader or political party. We will not be dragged back into the past. We will lead the resistance to any effort that would shred our social fabric or our Constitution.

LGBT people have not always been a part of the public life or history of Pennsylvania and America. But they have always been there. We are a part of the fabric of this great state and nation and we will not go backwards quietly or without a very loud fight. That is our promise.

Signers:
Equality Pennsylvania, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, LGBT Center of Central PA, Alder Health Services, SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley (Bethlehem), Upper Delaware GLBT Center, Inc., PFLAG Pittsburgh, Pride at Work, PA Chapter, UFCW Local 1776 OUTreach, Equality Fest / York LGBT Center (York), Pride of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Mazzoni Center, Make The Road Pennsylvania, ACLU of Pennsylvania, and Proud Haven.

EQUALITY PENNSYLVANIA

With 60,000 members across the commonwealth, Equality Pennsylvania is the leading organization advancing equality and opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Pennsylvanians.

Donald Trump & ACT UP Shared Same Publicist

By Michael Petrelis
Central Voice San Francisco Correspondent

History, like life, is strange.

If I knew this factoid from back in the AIDS plague years when I was in the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, it faded from my memory.

According to David France's new book by the same title as his movie *How to Survive a Plague*, there's a connection between the activist group and president-elect Donald Trump:

"As the group entered its second year, the pace it set was numbing. Each week brought expanding reports from (Peter) Staley, whose efforts succeeded in making ACT UP-branded clothing among the city's most popular fashionwear.

"An intense man with a large voice named Bob Rafsky headed up the Media Committee, as good a match as Staley was to fund-raising. By day, Rafsky was spokesman for the real estate developer Donald Trump. He knew assignment producers and editors at the highest levels."

Of course, no one knew back in 1988 that Trump would run for and win the White House. Who would have thought there was a connection between an ACT UP leader and Trump?

Rafsky, who died in 1993 from HIV disease, was a senior vice president of Howard J. Rubenstein & Associates, the New York City public relations firm, from 1982 to 1989. He left to devote full time to helping Act Up, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, become the nation's most prominent AIDS protest group. He was also a former reporter for the Philadelphia Bulletin.

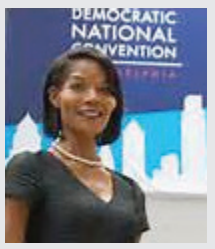
Bob Rafsky confronting then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton, 1992, a scene televised worldwide.

During a Democratic fund-raiser in midtown Manhattan in 1992, Rafsky challenged Bill Clinton to define his AIDS policies. "What are you going to do about AIDS? We're dying!" Rafsky said in the televised exchange.

"That's why I'm running for President, to do something about it," Clinton responded. Subsequently, Clinton solicited the help of leading AIDS advocates to draft a specific AIDS agenda that he said he would carry out as president.

Trans Survey Reveals Life across Nation

Former Susquehanna Township resident Mara Keisling, executive director, National Center for Transgender Equality



Transgender advocate and educator Sharron Cooks

By Central Voice

"The poverty rate of the transgender community is three times higher than the general population," Sandy James said, reporting on the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) released last month.

With almost 28,000 respondents, the survey reveals startling disparities between transgender people and the general population, says former Susquehanna Township resident Mara Keisling, executive director, National Center for Transgender Equality.

The survey sampled the most basic elements of life such as finding a job, having a place to live, accessing medical care, and enjoying the support of family and community. The data represents "the most comprehensive picture to date about the lives of transgender people in the US," Keisling says.

The 2015 survey was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and serves as the follow-up to the groundbreaking 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, which helped shift perceptions of transgender people's experiences and challenges.

For years the federal government "has not included transgender or LGB people in surveys" Keisling notes. "We're a small but emerging group," she says. "Eight years ago less than 10% of the population knew a transgender person. Now it's up to about one-third," she points out.

Survey Project Manager Sandy James stressed the inordinately high negative social outcomes. "Unemployment is 15%, three times higher than the rest of the nation," James says.

Philadelphia native and transgender advocate and educator Sharron Cooks shared on a conference call her personal experience with turning to sex work when she was unable to find other employment. "Today, I own my own business," she says.

Plans are to conduct the survey every five years.

Full survey: www.ustranssurvey.org/report

VA Scraps Sex-Change Surgeries Over Funding

By Amy Bushatz

A proposed rule change that would have allowed sex-change surgeries for transgender veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs has been scrapped amid questions over how to pay for it.

"VA has been and will continue to explore a regulatory change that would allow VA to perform gender alteration surgery and a change in the medical benefits package, when appropriated funding is available," according to a statement from the department to Military.com. "Therefore, this regulation will be withdrawn from the Fall 2016 Unified Agenda."

The department currently covers hormone therapy, mental health care, preoperative evaluation and long-term care after a sex reassignment surgery for qualified veterans, officials said. The change would have added gender reassignment surgery to that list.

The sex-change surgery rule that was set to be included was kicked back by the Office of Management and Budget because the VA did not include a plan for how they would fund the change, a senior department official said.

A 2011 executive order issued by President Barack Obama requires agencies to take costs into account when proposing rule changes. The sex-change operation rule's rejection by the OMB doesn't mean they don't support the change, the official said -- just that the office needs to see funding plans for it.

VA officials notified members of Congress of their decision to exclude the change in a letter sent on Monday. The VA first proposed the rule change in June in the Federal Register. Its removal from agenda release could leave the change in jeopardy as Obama officials and Democrat political appointees with the VA prepare for a hand-off to President-elect Donald Trump, a Republican.

Trump has not yet spelled-out his stance on transgender medical treatment within the military or VA. In the past his stance has been seen as contradictory. He has both said he would repeal an Obama administration directive for schools nationwide to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of their choice and protect transgender people under the law.

A ban on openly serving transgender troops was lifted in June when the Defense Department announced that it would pay for sex-change operations for qualifying transgender troops. Tricare does not cover sex-change operations for military family members or retirees.

"...the decision is frustrating but not surprising..."
-Leila Ireland, transgender former soldier

Leila Ireland, a transgender former soldier who served in the Army as a male and was medically retired last year, said the decision is frustrating but not surprising given the results of the election.

"It's very frustrating to even see or hear that they are doing that because of all the work that many people before me have done," she said. "But it's important to remember that even though they are changing their minds right now, there's going to be a way and we're going to find that way. Everything happens for a reason and we're not going to be set back."

Other military family advocates said they hope the military community will continue to fight for transgender benefits.

"All of our nation's veterans, regardless of their gender identity, deserve access to the medical care they earned serving our nation. This is a deeply disappointing setback in making sure an often medically necessary procedure is part of that care," Ashley Broadway, president of the American Military Partners Association, which advocates for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender troops and families, said in a statement.

"We implore fair-minded Americans to stand united in holding our new administration officials accountable by insisting this be fixed," she said.

TransCentralPA Topics

By Joanne Carroll
president of TransCentralPA

Broken Hearts – Wasted Lives

Last Nov. 20, a group of hardy souls mounted the State Capitol steps in a howling wind that made the ambient temperature seem colder than the actual readings. They persevered in spite of the less than comfortable surroundings.

They gathered…50+ to memorialize those transgender persons that were victims of homicide during 2016. In all, 26 names were read, and 26 candles were lit, tears were shed, and all huddled together to provide each other with warmth and support.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance 2016 has come and gone, but the message continues, transphobia is real. This day is an International Day of Remembrance, as it is observed in well over two hundred countries, worldwide.

It began simply, in November of 1988, and for nearly 30 years, the memory of Rita Hester causes transgender-identified persons and their allies to come together and offers each participant an opportunity to stand together and say no more.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is more than just a memorial. It raises public awareness of the hatred and violence against those in our transgender community that often, the media suppresses. It publicly mourns and honors the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten, giving their silenced lives new voice. It is an opportunity to meet hatred and indifference with love and respect.

Additionally, it gives the public a consciousness that violence against the transgender community exists, but it also raises the awareness that many within the community die at their own hands, by suicide. Surveys have indicated that well over 40% of the transgender community attempts to end their lives because they are unable to see a path forward in living an authentic life.

Authenticity is what life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are all about. When a trans-person cannot comprehend that these rights exist for them, it causes a despair that is so overwhelming, that no path forward seems possible and the choice to end it all is seen as the only way to get relief. I can speak to that, because I faced that choice four times. In each case, I felt that life as I needed it to be would never be possible, but this story is not about me.

We will likely never know how many we lose each year to suicide, because those stories seldom reach the news. Likewise, although we remembered 26 lives this year, we will never know exactly how many died, because not all of these murders hit the news because of media bias, and misgendering.

TransCentralPA extends its profound appreciation to all the readers and candle lighters, and more specifically, we thank Bishop Michael Scalzi of the Old Catholic Diocese; Doctor Rachel Levine, Physician General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Ted Martin, Executive Director of EqualityPA. Also, Louie Marven, Executive Director, LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania, Samia Malik of the Muslim community; Reverend John Ward-Diorio, Senior Pastor, St Paul's United Church of Christ, Mechanicsburg; and Reverend Yvette Davis for participating in this year's ceremony.

Going forward, let us hope that the list will grow smaller each year and pray the American people become more tolerant and less hateful.

Joanne Carroll is the current President of TransCentral PA. TransCentral PA is committed to providing advocacy and caring support for transgender individuals, their significant others, families, friends and allies.

LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director

Speaking out and taking action against gender-based violence

The LGBT Center's vision is a welcoming and intentionally-inclusive community, where all members of the community can be developed, enriched, and empowered. That vision can't be realized unless everyone can be their full selves, in every aspect of their identity, without fear of violence.

On November 20 every year, we remember people who have been killed in the last year because of anti-transgender violence. We also must celebrate the strength and resilience of transgender people. I think particularly of the trans youth who use the Center, who are educators and activists, community leaders and artists. They remind me that our communities, particularly the trans folks in our communities, have ALWAYS had to be strong and resilient, and that we are prepared for what is ahead of us in the shifting cultural and political landscape.

Our hope for ending violence against trans individuals is to remember that it will not stop when our movements achieve legal equality—which we will achieve together. I know that a lot of people are scared and some are getting right back to work to prevent the progress we've made from slipping away, and to even advance that progress as possible. This is necessary work, but I hope we can all remember that we can also make progress toward ending violence against trans people outside of the legal system. By being strong allies, those of us who are cisgender can speak up for trans people and trans issues to our cisgender friends and neighbors who might not be allies yet. And we can create safe and nurturing spaces in our organizations, social circles, and homes.

Almost all of those trans and gender non-conforming individuals we remembered during this year's Transgender Day of Remembrance and beyond were Black or Latinx. Many of them were immigrants. This reminds us that our work to end violence must be intersectional, and all of us who are against gender-based violence need to speak up and show up whenever we are able, when anyone in our community is experiencing racism, xenophobia, and transphobia.

Transgender Day of Remembrance is an important and meaningful annual tradition, when, in Harrisburg under TransCentralPA's leadership, we create a public space to speak out against gender-based violence and honor the dignity of those we lost in the past year because of anti-transgender hatred and violence. We encourage our LGBT communities and allies to take action by supporting trans people, and by supporting organizations that support trans people, particularly those that are led by trans people. There are not enough folks working to end gender-based violence, but there are a lot of us, and we need to work together more now than ever.

Together, we can realize the vision of a welcoming and intentionally inclusive world.

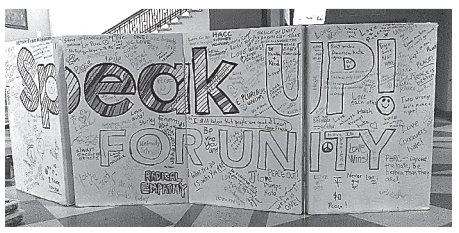
The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

Hate & Unity by the numbers…

Nov. 5, the capitol region hosted the National Socialist Movement at the state Capitol. The organization is thought to be one of the country's largest neo-Nazi groups. The event was their bi-annual gathering to protest against diversity.

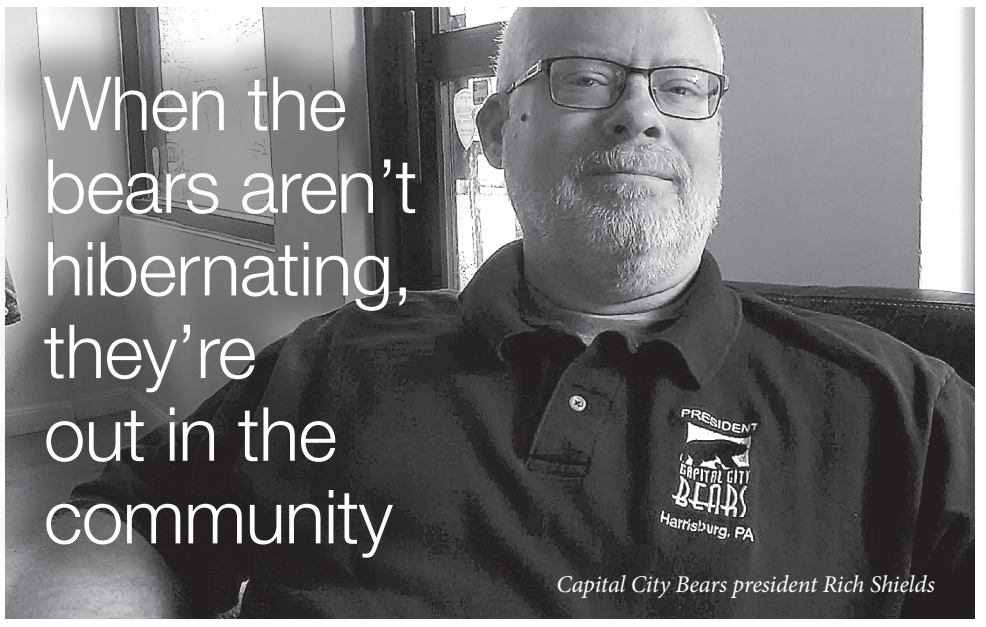
The event also marked the organization's formal announcement that 11 other "white power" organizations were now a formal coalition.

Also on Nov. 5, Anne Van Dyke, chair of the Rapid Response Team at the Community Responders Network, and others, organized a "unity" rally at Harrisburg High School. That event was held at the same time as the Nazi event.



Here's how the parallel events played out by the numbers.

- ***Nazis 50, Counter-protestors 200, Police 100***
- ***Nazis obtained a permit. Counter-protestors did not.***
- ***Unity 200, Counter-protestors 0, Police 3***
- ***Nazis drew 200 counter-protestors.***
- ***Most notable Nazi moment: Repeated shouts of "White Power" delivered with Adolph Hitler's Nazi salute.***
- ***Most notable Unity moment: When speakers talked about what disparate economic and racial groups have in common.***



Capital City Bears president Rich Shields

Capital City Bears Connect Community & Business

By Frank Pizzoli

"We offer a lot of different activities in addition to our popular Bear Nights at The Brownstone," Capital City Bears president Rich Shields tells *Central Voice.*

"Like our members are involved in different aspects of the community, we wanted our fundraising to reflect the same," explains Rich Shields, 52, president of Capital City Bears.

We drew in a fun, mixed crowd – gay, straight, who cares.

Each month the social organization hosts a fundraiser benefitting one of the region's nonprofit organizations. "We raise an average of $367 per event," Shields, says.

Kenn Robenolt, 59, Shield's husband, is club treasurer. "In the summer of 2005, nine guys founded the Capital City Bears," he explains. Now they have 78 members, including MD, DE, and NJ.

Charities have included: The United Way Foundation of the Capital Region, The Black and White Party, NorthWest Pennsylvania Pride Alliance, Equality North Carolina, South Carolina Equality, and Red Ribbon Friends, Leukemia/ Lymphoma, Ovarian Cancer, Alzheimers Research, Howard Hanna Children's Free Care Fund, Heavenly Paws, Highmark Children's Fund, Central PA Pride, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), and Special Olympics (York Polar Bear Plunge).

Toward the end of each year, the group decides on a list of recipients. "Members are often involved on their own or through work with worthy organizations. Some ideas come from them," Shields says.

The 2017 beneficiary organizations are listed on the web site.

With events reaching out beyond the LGBT community, attendance often reflects a broad swath of the community. In effect, their effort connects the business community with the LGBT community. For example, Last October realty company Howard Hanna hosted a Bear Night benefitting the Children's Free Health Care Fund. Howard Hanna's national office supports the fund and a local franchise collaborated with Capital City Bears to raise funds. "We drew in a fun, mixed crowd – gay, straight, who cares. We all wanted to support the Children's Fund. That's what we had in common," Shields says.

Mixing it up with the larger community is "good business all around," Shields notes. "We see a spill over to surrounding establishments. People hit nearby restaurants for dinner before or after a benefit. They stroll over to the other bars, gay or straight, in the neighborhood," he says. "Everyone can be who they are with no stigma or rejection. Together we can help others in need," Shields says.

The group also hosts a Wednesday Night Dinner at rotating restaurants and "non-bar" adventures and activities.

"Our Wednesday dinners are like a family night when we get together for the fellowship," Shields explains. Since members may also want to include their children or family, "we hit the Renaissance Fair, the Farm Show, car shows, host an annual pool party," Shields says.

Info: www.capitalcitybears.com

Capital City Bears 2017 charities benefitting from their efforts the third Saturday of every month. Check web site calendar.

January- *Alder Health Services*
February – *Matthew Shepard Foundation*
March – *Black and White Party Inc.*
April – *Ben Cohen: Stand Up Foundation*
May – *Beauty After Bruises*
June – *Pride Festival of Central Pa*
July – *Alzheimer's*
August – *Children's Hospital of Philadelphia*
September – *St. Jude's Children's Hospital*
October – *Children's Free Care Fund.*
November - *Diabetes*
December – *Black and White Party*

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Pentagon to same-sex domestic partners:

Benefits End in 2017

By Dawn Ennis
lgbtqnation.com

In a move sure to create stress for unmarried LGBTQ couples who work for the U.S. military as civilians, the Department of Defense is preparing to announce an ultimatum that it claims is meant to ensure "that both same-sex and opposite-sex couples are treated on an equal basis," according to Pentagon documents obtained exclusively by LGBTQ Nation.

Those documents reveal the military is ending all same-sex domestic partner benefits for civilian employees, effective December 31, 2016.

The plan, according to the information prepared by the DoD, offers those who cannot plan, organize and commit to a wedding by New Year's Eve the military equivalent of COBRA, known as Temporary Continuation of Coverage, or TSS. The only hitch is that these papers show those choosing this option "will be responsible for 100 percent of the premium payments."

The documents, one titled Phase-Out of DoD Benefits for Civilian Employees' Same-Sex Domestic Partners and their Dependents, and the other, an FAQ titled Phased End to Same-Sex Domestic Partner (SSDP) Benefits, outline what will happen in a little more than seven weeks. On January 1, those benefits will cease to exist for civilian employees across all six military branches, as well as Non-Appropriated Funds employees, or NAF, who are federal workers paid not by Congress but through other means.

This proposal, when compared with similar action by the State Department, leaves a very small window for couples to wed. Although the DoD documents show a planned deadline of December 31, the State Department's same-sex benefits "will begin phasing out December 14, 2015 and terminate officially on September 30, 2018," according to State records.

The U.S. military's policy on same-sex domestic partner benefits was outlined in a groundbreaking memorandum by outgoing Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in February 2013, months before the historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down the Defense of Marriage Act. Secretary Chuck Hagel revised the benefits after that decision, United States v. Windsor, making it clear "the same benefits currently available to heterosexual spouses are also available to same-sex spouses" and "to extend benefits to same-sex domestic partners" in keeping with the Obama administration policy set forth in 2010. The motivation to phase-out those SSDP benefits, according to the documents, is the high court's landmark marriage equality ruling last year, on the two-year anniversary of the day DoMA was declared unconstitutional:

"The June 26, 2015, Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States. This law permits same-sex couples to marry and to have access to the same basic rights and federal and other employment benefits afforded to opposite-sex couples who choose to marry."

"SSDPs of Federal employees may choose to marry their Federal employee partners on or before December 31, 2016, to continue receiving all previously authorized benefits."

The DoD in its FAQ document addresses a question that many same-sex civilian military employees will likely ask: "Is the Department forcing me to make a choice between marrying my SSDP and keeping the benefits?" The answer, is yes:

"The Department recognizes that the decision to marry is a very personal matter. However, since the June 26, 2015, Supreme Court decision made the option of marriage available to SSDPs, the Department must ensure that both same-sex and opposite-sex couples are treated on an equal basis. As a result, it is no longer necessary or appropriate to extend DoD employment benefits and entitlements to DoD civilian employees' SSDPs and their dependents."

If there's any good news in these documents, it's that there is one exception to the deadline of December 31. The papers say those employees working in foreign lands overseas or in U.S. territories will still enjoy the benefits for same-sex domestic partners beyond the end of the year, and only "terminate at the conclusion of the employee's tour of duty abroad or September 30, 2018, whichever occurs first.

But for the rest, this looming deadline will impact members of the American Federation of Government Employees, the union which represents 240,000 DoD civilian employees. "They are the people who ensure the military force is supplied, trained, equipped, fed and provided with quality medical care," AFGE says on it website. "Our members include tank and aircraft mechanics, commissary workers, ship inspectors, factory workers who manufacture artillery and weapons for our military, auditors, electricians, firefighters and police officers."

This would be the second time in as many years that the Pentagon has targeted civilians who earn their paychecks working for the military.

Most of those who are expected to be impacted are what the federal government labels "Title 5," or administrative personnel. Last year, a panel within the DoD recommended Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ask Congress for permission to remove Defense civilians from Title 5 and transfer them to Title 10, which governs military personnel and some present-day DoD civilian workers. That proposal was denounced by AFGE, as a violation of employees' rights and a flouting of the merit system.

Spokespersons for Secretary Carter and for the union did not respond to inquiries by press time, given the timing. When and if they do respond, this report will be updated.

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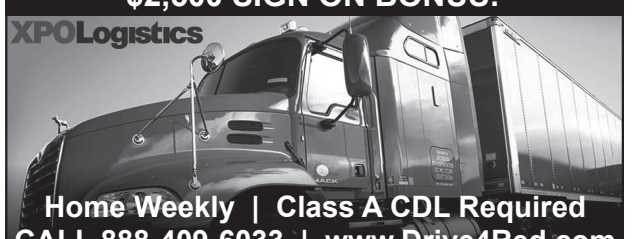

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Diana Smithson and Jacqueline Cote. *Photo: 777 Portraits Myrtle Beach, SC*

Former Walmart Employee Proposes Settlement on Same-sex Insurance Benefits

Former Walmart associate Jacqueline Cote and her lawyers have filed a motion asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts to grant preliminary approval of a class action settlement in Cote's action that challenged Walmart's lack of health insurance benefits for same-sex spouses of Walmart associates prior to 2014.

The case is known as Jacqueline Cote v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., No. 15-cv-12945-WGY (D. Mass.).

The $7.5 million proposed settlement would pay for claims by Walmart associates in the United States and Puerto Rico that they were unable to obtain health insurance coverage for their same-sex spouses from Walmart from Jan. 1, 2011 to Dec. 31, 2013, as well as the costs of administering the settlement and legal fees and expenses. In 2014, Walmart voluntarily made the same health insurance benefits available to same-sex spouses of its associates that it offered to opposite-sex spouses. As part of the proposed settlement, Walmart commits to continuing to do so in the future.

The proposed settlement class is expected to include no more than a few thousand current and former Walmart associates. Walmart employs nearly 1.5 million associates in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Sally Welborn, Senior Vice President, Global Benefits for Walmart, said, "We're happy both sides could come together to reach a resolution. Respect for the individual, diversity and inclusion are among the core values that made Walmart into the company that it is today. We will continue to not distinguish between same and opposite sex spouses when it comes to the benefits we offer under our health insurance plan."

Cote said, "I'm pleased that Walmart was willing to resolve this issue for me and other associates who are married to someone of the same sex. It's a relief to bring this chapter of my life to a close." Janson Wu, GLAD's Executive Director, said, "This is an important settlement for LGBTQ workers."

Juno Turner, a Partner at Outten & Golden LLP, said, "We are pleased that class members will have the opportunity to receive compensation."

Peter Romer-Friedman, a Counsel at Outten & Golden LLP, said, "We are glad that as part of the settlement Walmart will continue to provide the same health insurance benefits regardless of the gender of the associate's spouse."

Jonathan Smith, the WLC's Executive Director, said, "We believe the proposed settlement is fair and reasonable and are pleased we could announce it today. We are pleased to have worked with our colleagues at GLAD, Outten & Golden, and Arnold & Porter to achieve this settlement."

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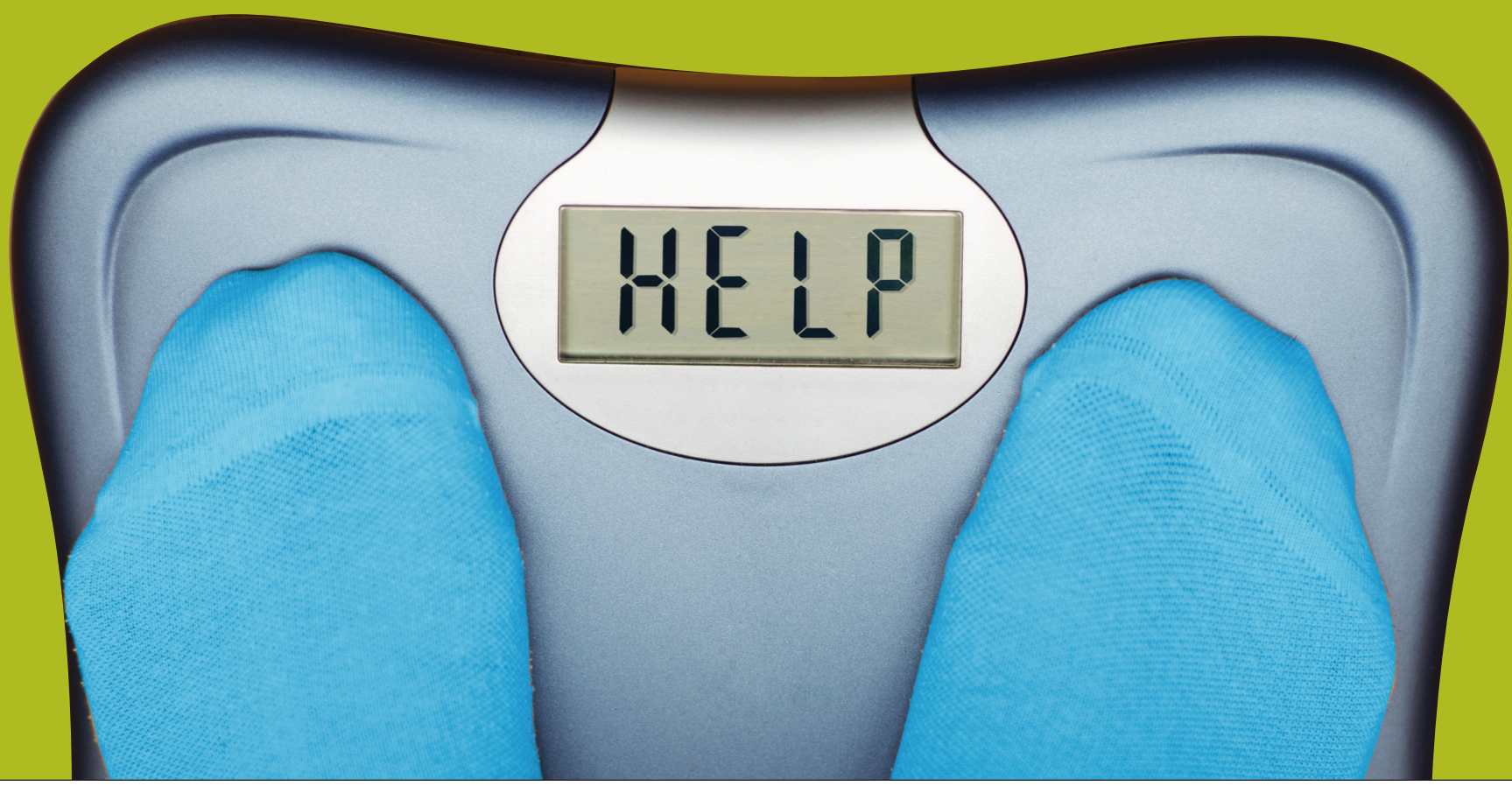
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